

Explaining the Taliban's - - - - -

lic. But this will take considerable time. During the interregnum the author has presented the available points of view on the course of events and the personalities mostly based on media reports. Some of them are true, others biased and yet others in different shades of gray.

Some examples. To say that a chain of Deeni Madaris was established by General Zia for personal political motives is economical with truth. Some such schools existed long before Zia emerged on Pakistan's political horizon. Others were established by the Afghan refugees immigrating to Pakistan to educate their children in exile. These were supported by various agencies. And yet

others were built on donations given by philanthropists either for the love of religion and education or to get tax concessions on charity.

The menace of drug trafficking and the heroin trade is an old game. At one time 'the golden triangle' was the primary source of supply to the world. The western countries and their media adopt a double standard on this phenomenon. While they bitterly criticise the countries that produce heroin and export it to the market, they remain mum about the importers in their own countries who pay a fabulous price to buy this dangerous powder. The drug trade, following the principle of supply and demand, can best be stopped if both ends are firmly and effectively plugged. The western laws are too lenient and have too many loopholes in them for the defaulters who generally escape punishment. Hence their tendency to import more.

While condemning the cultivation of poppy in Afghanistan, its ground realities deserve consideration. The country is devastated. Its economy is in ruins. The orchards and farms of the yester era are now barren lands. The Afghans grow poppy not because they like this crop but out of sheer economic necessity to survive. The affluent nations must help in rehabilitating this country and in providing alternative means of livelihood to the poppy growers.

Lack of consistency and coherence in Pakistan's Afghan policy is the result of her own internal difficulties. Pakistan can play a meaningful role in helping Afghanistan overcome its difficulties only if it is itself politically stable, internally peaceful, economically balanced and diplomatically respected. It is self-defeating for a weak country to offer ad-

vice to others when it cannot put its own house in order. The unity and integrity of a peaceful Afghanistan are vital for this region and for Pakistan. But, more important than that is to put Pakistan itself on a firm footing.

The author has expertly focused on the future, for Afghanistan, for Pakistan and for the region as a whole. Some of the conclusions drawn by him are hard to reject. Opinions may differ on others. And, on yet others, there may be reservations. Matin may himself be surprised if everyone agreed with him wholeheartedly. It is safe to predict that he may well be revising some of his own recommendations when additional facts, hitherto unknown, become public property.

Within the given restraints this is an excellent piece of research work, lucidly written, frankly analysed and boldly projected into the future. If the scenario painted by author is not rosy it is because the ground realities are thorny. Besides, it is always wise to plan for the worst while hoping for the best. If this work stimulates others to wield their pen on this topic, the time and effort spent in writing it would be worth the labour. The reader will find it a useful, informative, balanced and well produced effort. The publishers also deserve credit for sponsoring this work.

For inexplicable reasons the name of the author printed on the title of the book is without his military rank. This is a deviation from the practice followed by him in the past as his two previous publications in the English language contained his rank and name. In his political constraints dominated the military norms, deep in his heart Matin may be feeling like a fish without water.

The writer is former vice chief of the army staff

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

21 FEB 1999

DAWN

13 FEB 1999

'Kabul decision to isolate Osama is part of UK deal'

CAIRO, Feb 12: Britain has acceded to Pakistan's request to contain the activities of MQM leader Altaf Hussain in exchange for Islamabad exerting pressure on Kabul to isolate Saudi dissident Osama Bin Laden, the London-based Arabic-language newspaper, *Al Hayat*, reported on Friday.

It quoted well-informed Afghan sources as having said they did not rule out a deal between the Taliban and Islamabad and Britain under which Britain would pledge to isolate Altaf Hussain and the Taliban would take a similar action against Osama bin Laden.

According to the report, the deal was initially worked out on the sidelines of a visit to Islamabad this week by British Junior Minister Derek Fatchett during which he met a senior Taliban official and urged them to "control" Osama.

Al-Hayat also reported that Britain could eventually allow the Taliban to open a liaison office in London in exchange for isolating

Osama.

On Wednesday, the Afghan Islamic Press reported that the Taliban had banned Osama from accepting visitors or having outside contact. The AIP report said all communication equipment, including his telephone and radio, had been withdrawn.

The Saudi dissident is accused of masterminding bomb attacks against US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August that killed 224 people.

However, the United States said on Thursday that the Taliban move was not acceptable.

"Our view is that what they have announced falls woefully short of what is required," State Department Spokesman James Foley told reporters.

"We have repeatedly made clear to the Taliban that Osama bin Laden should be expelled from Afghanistan immediately to a place where he can be brought to justice for his crimes," he said. — AFP

NATION 13 FEB 1999

'Afghan decision to isolate Osama part of UK deal'

CAIRO (AFP) - Afghanistan's ruling Taliban Islamic militia has agreed to isolate Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden in exchange for a pledge by Britain to curtail the movements of MQM chief Altaf Hussain, the *Al-Hayat* newspaper reported on Friday.

"Well-informed Afghan sources told *Al-Hayat* that the Taliban's decision to isolate Bin Laden came in response to British wishes," the Arabic-language London-based newspaper said in a front-page report.

"The sources did not rule out a deal between Taliban and Islamabad and Britain under which Britain pledges to isolate Altaf Hussain, who is accused by Islamabad of involvement in the latest sectarian violence in Karachi," *Al-Hayat* said. According to the report, the deal was worked out on the sidelines of a visit to Islamabad this week by British Junior Minister Derek Fatchett during which he met a senior Taliban official and urged them to "control" Bin Laden.

Al-Hayat also reported that Britain could eventually allow Taliban to open a liaison office in London in exchange for isolating bin Laden.

Whereabouts of Osama still a mystery

bin Laden remained a mystery. A Pakistani intelligence source told AFP that bin Laden was spotted on Afghan soil near the Iranian border Friday.

Iran denied bin Laden was headed for Iran. The claims by the intelligence source were "irresponsible" and "regrettable," a foreign ministry spokesman said.

BENAZIR CONCERNED: Opposition leader Benazir Bhutto has expressed grave concern over the press report about the disappearance of Osama bin Laden from Afghanistan.

In a statement issued on Sunday she said it was intriguing that Osama bin Laden had mysteriously disappeared without anyone seeming to know anything about his whereabouts.

She asked the government to come out clean on the matter and explain to the people of the country the correct position about Osama bin Laden. She said it was all the more necessary as rumours have been circulating in the recent past about some undisclosed quid pro quo for assistance in the expulsion of Osama from Afghanistan. —APP/AFP/NNI

KABUL, Feb 14: Mystery surrounds the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden, amid scepticism about reports by the Taliban militia that he has gone missing inside Afghanistan.

Washington said it could not confirm some reports that the man accused of masterminding last year's deadly US embassy bombings had already left the country.

Diplomatic sources in Pakistan and here speculated that bin Laden could still be in Afghanistan but trying to leave for Dubai or Iraq.

One diplomatic source in Pakistan said: "We think he could still be in Afghanistan but he will definitely be looking at getting out of the country through private support. No government will help."

"Capture would be too easy in Chechnya but in Dubai, where he has many private supporters, he could hide. News reports have said that Iraq might be prepared to take him. But could he trust Saddam Hussein?"

The highest authority in Afghanistan's Taliban regime, Mullah Mohammed Omar said late on Sunday that the whereabouts of

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14 FEB 1999

Afghanistan turns hot for Osama

Situationer

By Syed Talat Hussain

ISLAMABAD – The announcement from the Mullah Umar government in Afghanistan that the Taliban have lost contact with Osama bin Laden and that he perhaps gone out of their country has left a big question mark on the status of the topman on the US hitlist of global terrorists. Islamabad's diplomatic circles are full of speculation of all variety: could he still be in Afghanistan? Has he already moved out of the country, gone perhaps to Chechniya or to another refuge? Is he dead, because of the last time the Taliban feigned ignorance about the whereabouts of the Iranian diplomats, they were later discovered from the graves?

The general perception is that Osama is in Afghanistan but planning to leave the country; and the Taliban have issued the statement to make sure that Washington does not launch another phase of decisive military strikes on the hideouts which are known to have been sued by him.

The threat of the American strikes on Afghanistan has been looming large for quite sometime. Unconfirmed reports suggest that during his recently concluded talks with the Taliban and Pakistani officials, the US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, Karl Inderfurth, strongly made the point to the Taliban to extradite Osama quick-

Afghanistan turns hot for Osama

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ly to a country where he could be brought to justice. Although he gave no specific deadline for Osama's extradition, his formulation of the demand suggested that Washington was keeping all its options open, including the option of further strikes.

Military observers in Islamabad believe that if the Taliban failed to meet Washington's demand of Osama's extradition ground could be levelled for imminent strikes on Afghan Afghanistan, "far more decisive and deadly than the missile attack last year".

The possibility of the attacks gained more weight when Richard Clarke from the US National Security Council issued a widely-quoted statement that Washington would use force to take out terrorists even if they are hiding in other countries. This seemed to be a message meant for the Taliban on Osama bin Laden.

The Taliban's response to this build up of pressure was to show flexibility. The Afghan Islamic Press on Wednesday issued a statement saying that the Taliban had imposed fresh restrictions on Osama. "Osama bin Laden has been disallowed to meet any visitors or other people" the statement said. It also mentioned a decree by the supreme leader of the Taliban, Mullah Umar, which suggested that all facilities including his telephone and radio had been withdrawn saying that "he has no facilities any longer with him to communicate with anyone".

The Taliban also said that a special team has been set up to keep a close watch at the Saudi millionaire and to monitor his activities. Taliban spokesman also said that Osama bin Laden was free to leave but he will not be forced out.

But Washington termed this measure woefully inadequate, and it was obvious why: it fell short of the demand to extradite Osama bin Laden to another country. The latest reports about Osama bin Laden's

absence from Afghanistan show that the Taliban increasingly find that the man who once helped them get through difficult times and to whom they feel greatly indebted has become a national problem for them.

The Taliban's dilemma over Osama seems to have been made more acute by a certain distancing Islamabad has introduced in its relations with them over the Osama bin Laden issue. The tone of Pakistan's advice to the Taliban on Osama has surely changed. From polite requests to show 'practical-mindedness on Osama bin Laden Pakistan began to reflect anxiety over the lingering issue which, its diplomats repeatedly told the Taliban, involved costs for Pakistan too high and too needless to pay. Pakistan policy makers apparently also signalled to successive American visitors that they did not care what happened to Osama bin Laden as long as Islamabad did not get caught in the crossfire.

This situation narrowed the options down for the Taliban to the following:

a) to let Osama bin Laden stay in Afghanistan; b) to extradite him to another country; c) to wash their hands off him in such a way that do not appear to ditch him or seem to be his providers and protectors. They have opted for the third one, the best under the circumstances. This means that the Taliban can take the position that since Osama bin Laden is not in Afghanistan there is no reason why Washington should launch strikes against him. Even if Washington does not buy what the Taliban are saying and insists that he is in Afghanistan, it will be a little hard for the US to pinpoint where he is, and even harder to launch militarily useful strikes. It gives Osama bin Laden options to consider other hide-outs and perhaps sneak out of Afghanistan whenever he has the opportunity. But he is clearly a man with decreasing options, fewer friends, and awesome odds to confront.

NATION 14 FEB 1989

Osama goes missing

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR - Osama bin Laden has 'gone missing' and his whereabouts are unknown, a spokesman for Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia said Saturday.

Meanwhile, the Taliban representatives in Pakistan confirmed his disappearance from this country since Friday morning, the spokesman said.

The Iraqi authorities had refused to offer him asylum.

The office of Maulvi Wakeel Ahmad in Qandahar when approached, suggested to establish contacts with the Islamabad-based Afghan Ambassador Maulvi Said Rahman Haqqani as, according to details in this regard. Haqqani, however, confirmed absence of Osama Bin Laden from his hideouts since Friday morning. He was unaware about the new hideout of Osama Bin Laden.

"We ourselves are searching for Osama and if you (newsmen) remain informed us," was the reply of Said Rahman Haqqani while replying to a question. He said journalists are too much

'Osama seen on Iran border on Friday'

PESHAWAR (AFP) - Osama bin Laden was sighted Friday on Afghanistan territory along the Iran border, a high-placed Pakistani intelligence source told AFP.

The source did not identify the exact location where Osama was seen and said his further movement was not known. Earlier Saturday, a Taliban spokesman said Osama had 'gone missing' and his whereabouts were unknown.

However, some independent sources very close to the students militia, told this correspondent that Osama had crossed the Pak-Iran border at Torghundi in Herat province of Afghanistan previous Friday morning. From Iran, he along with his aides reportedly shifted to Iraq. But neither Taliban nor Iranian sources in Peshawar confirmed

such reports.

Independent sources maintain that Osama is accompanied by a large number of his aides and supporters. However, the strength of these people, who also include Arab and Pakistani, hardliners is yet to be ascertained.

AFP adds: 'But we have not forced him out,' Taliban spokesman Tayeb Khan, said from Kandahar.

Taliban officials said no pressure was put on Osama to leave the country in spite repeated demands by the United States not to let him to stand trial for his bombings of two US embassies in east Africa on August 7 which left more than 200 people dead.

Osama was believed to have been living in Kandahar, the Taliban's de facto base in southern Afghanistan, since the US last year launched retaliatory missile strikes against his base in Afghanistan.

His continued residence in Afghanistan raised local fears of another US military strike and hampered efforts by foreign aid groups and the UN to return after their evacuation following the US missile strike.

Analysts said the Taliban desire for recognition as a legitimate government, given that it controls 80 per cent of the country, would have impacted on their reckoning and moves to isolate Osama.

But the United States said Thursday Taliban moves to isolate Osama within Afghanistan were not acceptable.



curious and 'I am confident they would find him anywhere in the world.'

While the Peshawar-based Taliban representatives as well as Afghan diplomats were aware about the fate of Osama Bin Laden. One of them said that they came to know about escape of Osama from Afghanistan through media.

NATION

15 FEB 1999

Osama shifts to unknown place

By Ahmad Hassan

PESHAWAR, Feb 13: Osama Bin Laden, the Saudi millionaire, has reportedly gone missing from his hideout near Kandhar, the southern headquarter city of the Taliban, since Friday. He is believed to have shifted to an unknown place, Afghan sources confirmed on Saturday.

There were conflicting reports about his whereabouts as some sources suggested he had left the country and moved to Iraq via Iran. But the report was corroborated by independent sources.

The Taliban leadership has categorically stated that Osama has left his place of residence in Afghanistan without leaving any information behind about his whereabouts.

A Taliban spokesman, Tayyab Agha, talking from Kandhar reiterated the militia's stand that they would never expel their guest (Osama) even if the US destroyed the entire Afghanistan.

The Afghan ambassador in Islamabad, Mr Haqani, confirming the report told newsmen that had gone missing and that no one knew his present whereabouts.

An independent Afghan news agency Sahar also confirmed that the Saudi dissident had gone missing. It told Dawn that he had left the country for an undisclosed destination following the restrictions put on his activities by the Taliban.

The Taliban, ruling more than three-fourths of Afghanistan, had put the Saudi exile under strict surveillance and had withdrawn all facilities of communication with the rest of the world, including satellite telephone and internet etc.

AFP adds: Osama bin Laden was sighted on Friday on Afghan territory along the Iran border, a high-placed Pakistani intelligence source told newsmen.

The source did not identify the exact location where the Saudi dissident was seen and said his further movement was not known.

DAWN

14 FEB 1999

Osama still in Afghanistan, claim aides

By Nafees Takkar

ISLAMABAD - Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden is still in Afghanistan, claimed Pakistan-based some of Osama's aides on Sunday night.

"We are unable to locate him yet it is a fact that he (Osama) is in Afghanistan," confirmed confidants of Osama bin Laden from two different places in Pakistan.

They denied reports that Osama had gone to Iraq. "In his private talks with his confidants he has already ruled out the idea of shifting to Iraq," said one of the aides.

There were reports that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had offered asylum to Osama through his envoy.

"We would have allocated him, had his communication system was in working condition," said the other confidant. He added they had lost contact with Osama and his colleagues for the last four days.

Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar Mujahid also raised doubts about the next destination of Osama bin Laden. In an interview on Sunday, he said he did not know exactly whether Osama had left Afghanistan or not.

A day earlier Omar said: "We didn't order Osama to leave Afghanistan but he is missing."

"The Taliban guards provided to Osama are not bound to give us information about his destination," said an assistant to Mullah Amir Khan Muttaqi when he was contacted in Kabul.

"Osama bin Laden is not an easy bird," he said when asked whether US has took away the Sheikh.

The Taliban leadership presently is under tremendous pressure from US for giving asylum to Osama. The US believes Osama masterminded the August bombings of its embassies in Eastern Africa that killed over 250 people. Taliban are fearing another series of air strikes from US for its stand on the Saudi dissident. Taliban apprehend that this time Kandahar would be made target, which is considered the city of the rise of Taliban movement. The United States warned a few days ago that any country providing shelter to terrorists would be attacked.

The US was not happy with the recent restrictions the Taliban put on Osama. The ruling Taliban disconnected militia Osama's telephones and started monitoring his activities. The US authorities stuck to their demand of his expulsion from Afghanistan in their recent meetings with Taliban leaders in Islamabad and Peshawar.

Osama may be hiding in Afghanistan

DUBAI (AFP) - The leader of the Taliban militia in power in Kabul has admitted that alleged terrorist ringleader Osama bin Laden could still be in Afghanistan, in an interview with an Arab newspaper published Tuesday.

"He left his residence in Kandahar some days ago without telling us where he was going. Contact with him has been broken," Mulla Mohammad Omar told the London-based newspaper Al-Hayat.

"We think he is hiding somewhere, perhaps inside Afghan territory," the Taliban leader said. "We don't know where he is, whether he has left Afghanistan nor his destination."

Omar denied reports that a dispute within the Taliban had triggered bin Laden's departure from the Islamic militia's stronghold of Kandahar.

"Osama bin Laden is a guest of the Islamic emirate of Afghanistan. He is a comrade in arms," Omar said, adding that such reports were "nothing more than an illusion."

He also dismissed any link between bin Laden's departure and international recognition of the Taliban, whose administration has been officially recognized only by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"We think there should be no link," he said.

On the talks with Iran held in the UAE in early February, Omar said they were "fruitful and constructive" and signalled "the start of a detente" between the two Muslim neighbours.

Al-Hayat said Monday that bin Laden, the most wanted man in America, was still in Afghanistan but had moved north to an area controlled by pro-Taliban supporters of warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

NATION

17 FEB 1999

'Osama still in Hekmatyar area'

NATION

16 FEB 1999

DUBAI (AFP) - Osama bin Laden is still in Afghanistan in an area controlled by warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Arabic daily *Al-Hayat* said Monday.

The daily said Osama had left the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar several days ago with 10 supporters, including the head of Egypt's Jihad group, Ayman el-Zawahri, and a dozen Taliban soldiers.

He 'momentarily' stopped in a northern Afghan area controlled by Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami faction, the newspaper said, quoting 'informed' Afghan sources.

Diplomatic sources in Kabul and Pakistan have also said Osama could still be in Afghanistan.

Hekmatyar, although part of an anti-Taliban alliance, has some supporters in northern Baghlan province such as commander Bashir Baghlani who is now fighting for the Taliban.

But the daily quoted other sources as saying Osama was seen last Wednesday in Jalalabad, in the east of the country,

and that he was suffering kidney pain.

The Taliban, who control about four-fifths of Afghanistan, on Saturday said Osama had 'disappeared,' but did not say whether he had left the country.

Al-Hayat quoted Egyptian Islamist sources as saying many militants linked to Osama and Zawahri had left Afghanistan recently, anticipating US pressure on the Taliban to hand over Osama.

Zawahri is considered to be Osama's right-hand man. He is currently being tried in absentia in Egypt as part of a trial of 107 people suspected of belonging to the Jihad group.

Osama's disappearance has sparked widespread speculation over his whereabouts.

'The question is who would want him, it's a bit like trying to get rid of contaminated radioactive waste, nobody wants that kind of heat,' said a western military analyst, who monitors the region.

'My reckoning is that he's somewhere in southern Afghanistan and for

the Taliban not knowing where he is would suit them,' he said.

Washington and London remain sceptical about the militia's claim that Osama is missing.

But the military analyst said the militia had no reason to lie and added there were too many sources who could prove them wrong which would prove embarrassing.

One diplomatic source said Osama travelling with el-Zawahri would make sense given bin Laden's close affiliation with Egyptians who were responsible for his security when he was based in the eastern Afghan province of Khost.

There have been suggestions that bin Laden is attempting to get to Dubai or Iraq and had moved in with anti-Taliban militia.

But Afghan opposition political advisor Mohammad Eshaq said it was not likely bin Laden was with any members of the anti-Taliban alliance, and a spokesman for anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Masood laughed at the

suggestion and accused the militia of propaganda.

'All we know is what we read in the international press but we think the Taliban are just playing a game which is being organised by Pakistan,' Eshaq told AFP.

Pakistani sources have said the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had used its influence to urge the Taliban to resolve the Osama issue since Washington issued a five million dollar reward for his capture.

The reward made Osama America's most wanted man.

Thirteen days after the bombings of two US embassies last August 7, suspected bin Laden bases at Khost were bombed by US cruise missiles.

He then sought sanctuary in Kandahar and sources say he was accompanied by Zawahri.

Analysts said Osama's movements would be restricted by the weather and high terrain. Much of northern Afghanistan is currently inaccessible overland due to heavy snow.

Osama in Hekmatyar controlled area: Dubai daily

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The Taliban, who control about four-fifths of Afghanistan, on Saturday said Osama had "disappeared," but did not say whether he had left the country.

Diplomatic sources in the Afghan capital and Pakistan said Osama could still be in Afghanistan. Washington has accused him of masterminding last year's deadly US embassy bombings in east Africa.

Al-Hayat quoted Egyptian Islamist sources as saying that many militants linked to Osama and Zawahri had left Afghanistan recently, anticipating US pressure on the Taliban to hand over Osama.—AFP

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

16 FEB 1999

Laden running out of friends

By Anwar Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: Pursued vigorously by the US administration, determined to bring him home to face terrorism charges, Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden appears to be running out of friends.

Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia are the only dependable ally that the Islamist leader has had for years. Now the Taliban are finding it difficult to resist international pressure for expelling him from Afghanistan.

On Saturday, they informed the international media that bin Laden had vacated his base-camp near the Taliban headquarters in Kandahar. They said he had already left Afghanistan for an unknown destination.

Washington blames bin Laden for bombing two US embassies in East Africa in August and wants him to face the charges in a US court. More than 200 people were killed in the two blasts.

Both Washington and London have rejected the Taliban claim that bin Laden has left Afghanistan. Western diplomatic sources in Islamabad say that despite international pressure, the Taliban are still trying to protect bin Laden. They say although he has moved further away from the Taliban headquarters, Laden is still

hiding in Afghanistan.

They say a US ultimatum, delivered by a senior American official to a Taliban delegation in Islamabad two weeks ago, forced the militiamen to reduce their level of support to the Saudi dissident.

They say the 16-member ruling council of Taliban is divided over the issue. According to these sources, Taliban leader Mulla Mohammad Omar and his close associates still have a lot of sympathy for bin Laden but they are not sure how long they can face the US pressure for expelling him.

Sources close to Taliban say the Americans had asked the Afghan militia to deport bin Laden in two weeks or face the consequences. Later, a senior official in Washington said the US may also bomb military installations and other facilities of a country seen as extending "cooperative support" to "terrorists."

This change in US policy towards terrorists forced the Taliban to reconsider their support to bin Laden. Soon after the bombing of the US embassies in August, the US hit two alleged terrorist camps in Afghanistan with cruise missiles. Washington said the camps belonged to bin Laden's Al-Qaida group. The Americans did not target the Taliban.

The Taliban fear that a US attack on their facilities may have far-reaching consequences. "There is not much for the Americans to destroy inside Afghanistan but the attacks will encourage the Afghan opposition groups. Demoralised by the fall of Mazar-i-Sharif to the Taliban last summer, several rebel groups are watching the developments silently," said a Mujahideen leader in Islamabad. "The US attacks can re-activate them and the Taliban can not take this risk," he said.

To appease Washington, the Taliban first took away bin Laden's satellite phone and then prevented him from receiving visitors. When this did not satisfy the Americans, the Taliban said bin Laden had left their territory. They later said he was hiding with the Yunus Khalis group of Mujahideen. But the group has denied hiding him and says it has had no contact with the Saudi dissident for more than seven years. Bin Laden had close ties with groups like the former Afghan prime minister Gulbadin Hekmatyar as well. But none of them have come forward to help him.

Some religious groups in Pakistan and the Middle East have expressed support for him but none of them are in a position to offer him refuge. "Muslim governments are as afraid of

his Islamic zeal as the US. They want to maintain a safe distance from bin Laden," said a senior Pakistani official when asked if Pakistan would offer asylum to the Saudi dissident. "The Muslims have failed to fulfill their obligation to a fellow Muslim by refusing to help him when he needs their support," says Taliban leader Mulla Mohammad Omar.

Even Islamic Iran is not interested in helping bin Laden. He belongs to the Wahabi sub-sect of the majority Sunni Muslims which strongly opposes Iran's Shiite Islam. He also is an ally of the Taliban, a force the Iranians almost went to war with this fall.

So far only Iraq and the semi-independent republic of Chechniya have offered asylum to bin Laden. But the Saudi dissident does not trust the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussain. He rejects his Arab nationalist policies as negating his own pan-Islamist ideology. Yet he may be forced to seek refuge in Iraq as it is the only country where the Americans may find it difficult to reach him.

Ideologically he may feel more comfortable among the Islamist groups in Chechniya but it is not safe. The Americans may find it easier to enlist support from Russia and the neighbouring Central Asian states to catch bin Laden in Chechniya.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

16 FEB 1999

Afghans believe Osama is still in their country

Widespread alarm at possible US attack

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

KANDAHAR: Despite the Taliban claim that Osama bin Laden has gone missing, most inhabitants of Kandahar believe the Saudi dissident is still somewhere in Afghanistan and are alarmed by the possibility of a fresh US attack on their city.

Taliban supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar had said in an interview with The News Sunday that Bin Laden had gone missing and he could not definitely say whether he had left Afghanistan. However, he gave unconvincing arguments in support of his claim and the interview probably added to the confusion instead of offering an explanation with regard to Bin Laden's sudden disappearance.

Interviews with people in Kandahar city showed that most of them were not convinced that Bin Laden

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has left Afghanistan. "I cannot tell his whereabouts but I believe Osama is still somewhere in Afghanistan," said Najibullah, a shopkeeper in Herat Bazaar in Kandahar.

Mohammad Amin, another shopkeeper, also felt Bin Laden had not shifted to another country. "My gut feeling is that he is still in Afghanistan," he remarked. A taxi driver, Mohammad Ibrahim, said he had to believe the Taliban authorities when they claim that Bin Laden had disappeared. "I had not seen him when he was supposed to be in Kandahar. So if he is still around I will not be able to tell that this one is Osama," he argued.

Many other Kandaharites said they were not in favour of expelling Bin Laden or handing him over to the US or another country. Shopkeepers and customers in Khairi Market near the Chowk-i-Shaheedan here said it would be a disgrace for the Afghans, especially the Pukhtuns, to become inhospitable to a guest and ask him to leave. "How

can we violate our traditions and culture and betray a Muslim who is in trouble and has sought refuge with us," asked Sher Mohammad, a shopkeeper. A customer, Abdul Mateen, said Afghans have sacrificed even their lives in the past to protect their guests and they are willing to do it again. However, another shopkeeper, Mohammad Arif, said Bin Laden should not misuse his status as a guest and refrain from using Afghanistan's soil for attainment of his political objectives.

Some Kandaharites pointed out that the ruling Taliban as well as other Afghans were in a fix as they did not want to abandon their centuries-old traditions of hospitality even though the war-ravaged Afghanistan can ill-afford confrontation on the Bin Laden issue with the US and its Western allies and also Saudi Arabia. "Afghanistan has suffered death and destruction for two decades. We cannot suffer for ever," remarked a shopper who requested anonymity.

A few other Afghans were critical of the Taliban for getting Afghanistan embroiled in issues which would harm the country and forgetting their duty to serve their own people and solve their problems.

When asked whether they feared a US attack on Kandahar in view of the fact that Bin Laden was until now living in or near their city, almost every Kandahari said the Afghans had become used to war and the threat of American missile attack no longer worried them. "In this century, the Afghans defeated two super-powers — Britain and USSR. Thus the third super power, the US, cannot scare us into submission," declared a student Abdul Haye.

16 FEB 1999

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Saudi dissident left Afghanistan three weeks back

From DR JASSIM TAQUI

ISLAMABAD - In a newer development, information emanating from London maintains that Osama bin Laden had left Afghanistan a long time ago and that the news of his being "missing" appeared in the media when he had already settled elsewhere.

According to London-based Arabic daily Al-Quds Al-Arabia, Osama bin Laden left Afghanistan three weeks ago, only when he felt that he was being humiliated by Mullah Muhammad Omar, leader of the Taliban.

Al-Quds Al-Arabi is edited by Abdul Bari Atwan, a person known by his close contacts with Islamic militant groups, especially

with Osama bin Laden and Islamic resistant movement Hamas. This paper and other similar radical papers have been permitted to function in London in line with the British policy of "divide and rule."

On the one hand, the British authorities fully support conservative and authoritarian regimes in the Muslim world. On the other, they give sanctuary to radical, militant and even terrorist movements on the ground of freedom of expression. Atwan maintains direct contact with Osama bin Laden. He also claimed that he obtained information about his departure from Afghanistan, from people close to Osama bin Laden.

Atwan disclosed that Mullah Muhammad Omar snubbed Osama bin Laden when he went to congratulate him on the Eid-ul-Fitr.

Osama bin Laden was left to wait for about two hours outside. When Mullah Omar met him he was very cold. So bin Laden felt that he was not wanted any more in Afghanistan and decided to leave the country.

Osama also felt that the Taliban militia was under tremendous American pressure and that he was a persona non grata in Afghanistan. Furthermore, there was an acute division among the ranks of Taliban. A large number of Taliban felt that Osama bin

Laden was a liability on them and that because of him international community declined to recognise them though they control about 90 per cent of the Afghan territory.

Atwan dismissed the speculation that Osama bin Laden left for Baghdad. According to him, there is fundamental differences of ideology, perception and mode of work between him and the government of Iraq.

Atwan believes that Osama bin Laden has crossed over to Chechnya, Russia's southern region, where Moscow battled separatist rebels and was defeated in the process. Also, Osama has good contacts with the Chechen leaders and some of his men have

been fighting there.

According to a diplomatic source here, Osama could have left to Chechnya by a private plane. Bin Laden arrived in Afghanistan more than five years ago aboard his private plane with three wives, his children and 150 followers.

He was granted a safe haven. Before he left Afghanistan, he had access to the plane. It is presumed that he landed somewhere in Chechnya with his family using his private plane.

When asked to comment on the story of Al-Quds Al-Arabi, an Arab diplomat did not exclude the possibility.

He recalled a similar story of Gen. Kamil Hussain, son-in-law of Iraqi President Saddam Hussain. The former defected to Jordan with the daughter of Saddam Hussain. He was immediately given political asylum by late King Hussain.

However, the late King started humiliating Kamil Hussain by inviting his wife to the Royal Palace and ignoring him. That made Gen. Kamil Hussain to prefer death in Iraq over humiliation in Jordan. The source went on to say, "a true Arab would not tolerate insult or humiliation from anyone. He would prefer death over humiliation. Probably, that is exactly what has happened with Osama bin Laden."

Osama has not left Afghanistan: Envoys

By Umer Farooq

ISLAMABAD - Amidst speculations about the whereabouts of Osama Bin Laden, Islamabad based Western diplomats believe that the Saudi exiled millionaire has not left Afghanistan and is still somewhere in hiding in the war torn country which is "in fact the safest" for him.

"Had he left Afghanistan it would have come to our knowledge," said a western diplomat. "Our belief that he (Osama) has not left Afghanistan is based on negative indications, there is in fact nothing to suggest that he has left Afghanistan," said the Western diplomat.

Reports about Osama Bin Laden's sudden disappearance appeared in the newspapers on Sunday. These reports were preceded by reports about possible US missile strikes on Afghanistan to eliminate terrorist threat posed by Osama and his accomplices who are based in Afghanistan. "We are not sure about Osama bin Laden's whereabouts, we don't know where he is," said the diplomat.

General perception is that the Taliban leadership fed the information about Osama leaving Afghanistan to the press

to prevent Washington from launching military strikes against Afghanistan. This perception is reinforced by reports in the press about possible US strikes against Osama Bin Laden. "If there is any connection between the two, it is in the minds of Taliban leadership," said the diplomat when asked if there was any connection between reports about possible US strikes on Afghanistan and stories about Osama bin Laden leaving Afghanistan.

The issue of Osama bin Laden was recently discussed between Taliban officials and US Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth. In the talks Karl Inderfurth reportedly asked Taliban to expel Osama Bin Laden from Afghanistan so that he could be brought to justice for his alleged terrorist activities.

The issue of Osama bin Laden was also discussed between Pakistani and US Officials during the recent visit of US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott. Western diplomat opined that Pakistan enjoys substantial influence with Taliban "and that is why we ask them (Pakistani) to convince Taliban not to harbor Osama Bin Laden which makes them look like collaborating with international terrorism" said the western diplomat.

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Mystery shrouds Osama's whereabouts

Taliban suspect Osama has fled Afghanistan

By Nafees Takkar

ISLAMABAD – As the mystery still shrouds the whereabouts of the missing Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, his aides and guards are still in Afghanistan. A responsible official of Pakistan-based Harkat-ul-Mujahideen said Wednesday none of Osama's men crossed the Afghan border from any side of Afghanistan.

"All of them are in Afghanistan," and none of his Pakistani comrades has shifted to Pakistan. Had they left Afghanistan, they would have contacted us, he believed.

A well-trained and well-equipped battalion provides security to Osama bin Laden and his key leaders. The battalion has men from different countries including, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Their number is stated to be between 30 to 100 and they are known for their tough resistance.

The Harkat official said some of Osama's close men from Pakistan would have come back to their country had he shifted to any other country.

The official was confident of the safety of Osama and all of his men. "Everything is alright – don't worry," he responded when he was asked about the security measures of bin Laden. However, he maintained that bin Laden was missing along with his men.

The Harkat-ul-Mujahideen official was not in a position to give information about the present whereabouts of bin Laden but he also did not totally rule out the presence of Osama in Afghanistan.

The Pakistan-based Harkat-ul-Mujahideen has close links with bin Laden. The group was formerly named as Harkat-ul-Ansar. Its leaders then changed the name of the group for US had declared Harkat-ul-Ansar a terrorist group. Its men are getting spiritual and physical training in the alleged ter-

rorist camps of bin Laden in Afghanistan. Over 20 activists of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen were killed in the wake of US air strikes on the same camps which, took place in August last.

Osama has hundreds of supporters from different Arab and non-Arab countries who have opted for living together with him. The sudden missing of only bin Laden or all of his supporters is a big question for US, Saudi Arabia and Britain. Some prominent names that are very close to bin Laden include Aiman-al-Zawahari, chief of the Egypt-based Islamic group, Jamaat-al-Jehad, Muhammad Atif and three sons of Sheikh Umar Abdur Rehman. The mediemen had always found them in the company of bin Laden in Afghanistan.

Bin Laden is missing since last Thursday. Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Muhammad Umar made public his missing on Saturday last. Umar said Osama had gone missing, adding he did not know whether or not he had left Afghanistan.

Taliban leadership is under tremendous pressure from US for providing shelter to bin Laden. There was a strong impression at the beginning of the current week that US was close to strike Afghanistan once again to punish Taliban for their strong stand on bin Laden. The report that bin Laden has gone missing has, at least, delayed the US strikes on Afghanistan. US believes that bin Laden had masterminded last August bombings of US embassies in eastern Africa that killed over 250 people.

AFP adds: A spokesman for the Taliban militia was quoted as telling a private Afghan news service on Wednesday that Osama bin Laden had probably left Afghanistan. "We have no specific information about Osama bin Laden but we strongly suspect now that he has left Afghanistan," the spokesman told the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP).

ADDICTED TO DANGER

On assignment for 60 Minutes to film the terrorist camps in Afghanistan bombed by the U.S. last August, freelance cameraman and full-time adventurer Carlos Mavroleon was found dead in a Pakistan hotel, apparently of a heroin overdose. Was the Eton- and Harvard-educated son of a Greek shipping magnate a casualty of the Islamic war on America?

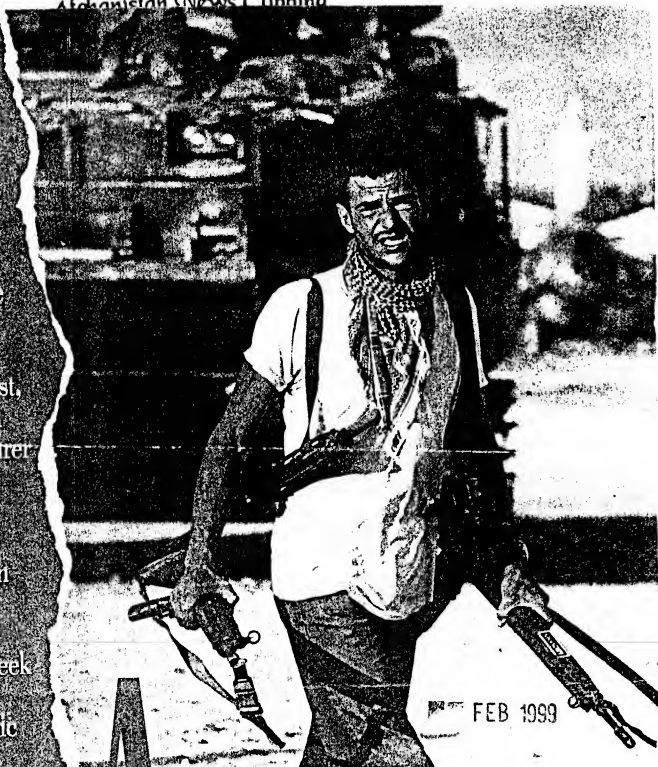
BY SEBASTIAN JUNGER



ТҮР ҮНЭМЛЭХ
Мавролеон Карлос
"Фри-Би-Си" агентлагийн
сурваллагч

THE YEARS OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY
Freelance cameraman Carlos Mavroleon was found dead in a Pakistan hotel, apparently of a heroin overdose. Was the Eton- and Harvard-educated son of a Greek shipping magnate a casualty of the Islamic war on America?

Afghanistan News Clipping



FEB 1999

round 10 P.M. on August 27, 1998, Malik Saad, the chief of police in Peshawar, Pakistan, received a telephone call saying that a foreigner was lying dead in a local hotel.

It was only a week after the American missile strikes on Afghanistan, and the atmosphere in Peshawar was extremely tense. Westerners were staying off the streets, and there was said to be a bounty on the heads of Americans. Saad rushed over to Green's Hotel, suspecting the worst, and was ushered into Room 304.

A dark-skinned man in local Afghan dress was lying shirtless on the bed, frozen by rigor mortis. One arm was crooked against his face and a dead cigarette was wedged between his lips. The ember from the cigarette had fallen onto his leg

and burned a hole through his loose trousers and into the flesh. His face was darkened with pooled blood, and a small trickle of blood had crept out of his right nostril. Found in the room were a stethoscope, a copy of the Koran, a carton of Marlboros, and four syringes. A black bag on the floor contained assorted camera gear and \$5,000 in cash. Arranged on the bed were 10 photographs, some of them showing the dead man accompanied by mujahideen rebels, all of them armed, all of them bearded. There was also a compass, a satellite phone, a fax from CBS News, two video cameras, and a British passport.

The man's name was Carlos Mavroleon, and he was already known to the authorities. Two days earlier, Mavroleon had been caught by the Pakistan secret police as he tried to slip into the terrorist training camps across the Afghan border. When the police accused him of being a spy, he told them that he was a freelance cameraman on assignment for CBS. They eventu-

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50 killed, 210 injured in Afghan quake

Death toll may rise: Tremors also felt in Pakistan: Measured 5.5 on Richter scale

KABUL (AFP) - At least 50 people were killed and 210 injured in a strong earthquake which struck eastern Afghanistan, officials and medical sources said on Friday.

Radio Shariat said the 50 were killed in just three villages near Mayden Sahr, about 60km west of Kabul in late Thursday's earthquake.

The Taliban authorities appealed for help from abroad.

"The condition of the people is bad. There is a lot of destruction and casualties ... the people need urgent help from international agencies," the radio said.

Many areas had been affected, houses had collapsed and livestock killed, with reports from remote rural areas still coming in.

"Casualty figures elsewhere were not known," the radio said.

The Red Cross said it would rush medical supplies and doctors to the area Saturday morning.

"There are casualties and houses have collapsed but the problem with Afghanistan is communications," a Red Cross spokesman told AFP.

The earthquake, measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, struck at 6:35 pm local time (1405 GMT) on Thursday and was felt in Pakistan and throughout the Panjsher valley to the north of Kabul.

Its epicentre was placed by the observatory in Peshawar at about 60km south of Kabul in Logar, a province dotted by villages and mud brick hamlets.

The area is also the site of a major earthquake fault line which stretches from Iran to Pakistan and across Afghanistan's central and southern provinces.

The Red Cross spokesman and Kabul

residents said the earthquake lasted an unusually long time, perhaps a minute.

"But this gave many people enough warning to get out of their houses before it intensified and that has probably kept the casualty figures down," the Red Cross spokesman said.

In Kabul, 10 people were admitted to Wazir Akhbar Khan and Carte Se hospitals where doctors, citing reports from the injured, said more people were feared dead.

"We've been told that quite a few children may have died," Dr Arif from Carte Se, told AFP.

He said most people had been treated for trauma and fractured limbs.

Two earthquakes in February and June last year in the country's north east left some 8,500 people dead. Both times it took days to determine the extent of the damage.

In December, Kabul was struck by a series of earthquakes, the strongest measuring 5.4 on the Richter scale, which left eight people dead after a dilapidated hotel collapsed.

However, local residents said the recent heavy rains and the preponderance of mud brick homes would have increased the vulnerability to the earthquake.

There were also concerns about the supply of foreign help.

The United Nations and most foreign aid organisations were evacuated from Afghanistan shortly after the US missile strike on suspected terrorist bases on August 20 last year.

Some non-government organisations have since returned but the UN agencies are still negotiating the conditions for their return with the Taliban authorities who control about 80 percent of the country.

Death toll in Afghan quake reaches 67

ANDER (Afghanistan), Feb 13: The death toll from an earthquake which struck eastern Afghanistan two days ago continued to climb on Saturday as rescue efforts get underway in isolated districts outside of Kabul.

The official Bakhtar news agency said it had confirmed 57 dead and another 10 children froze to death as they were too scared to go back to their homes following the quake.

Authorities said 27 children were missing while at least 210 people were injured and the number left homeless exceeded 1000, according to combined reports.

In Ander, near the earthquake's epicentre about 70 kilometres west of Kabul, Wardak provincial governor Malawy Shamsuddin told AFP that 300 people from two villages were homeless.

"Nine villages were severely affected in the region but we still don't have accurate figures," he said.

Authorities said a further 44 aftershocks had followed Thursday's quake with a major tremor felt in Kabul mid-afternoon on Saturday while rescue efforts in two districts centred on finding the missing children.

Hardest hit areas include Mayden Sahr in Wardak and surrounding villages like Ander and Chak, and hamlets in Logar province. The area covers about 1,000 square kilometres to the east and south of Kabul.

"Ten young boys and girls have died in Chak where people are scared to go back to their houses," a Taliban source said.

He said Chak was believed to be the worst-hit with 1,000 houses levelled and relief efforts had so far failed to reach them.

"Three hundred houses in Bambi Keli village and another 200 in Alasang village near Chak were also destroyed," he said.

Red Cross spokesman Josue Anselmo said the volume of destruction in Wardak is "impressive" with some villages destroyed by 80 to 100 per cent.

In Kabul, authorities said at least five houses had collapsed killing an elderly man, while local hospitals said 10 people had been admitted with injuries.

The earthquake measured 5.5 on the Richter scale—AFP

DAWN

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Afghan quake death toll 67

ANDER, Afghanistan (AFP) - The death toll from an earthquake which struck eastern Afghanistan two days ago continued to climb Saturday as rescue efforts get underway in isolated districts outside of Kabul.

The official Bakhtar news agency said it had confirmed 57 dead and another 10 children had died after they froze to death because they were too scared to return to their homes.

At least another 210 were injured and the number left homeless has risen to more than 1,000, combined reports said.

In Ander, near the earthquake's epicentre about 70 kilometres west of Kabul, Wardak provincial governor Malawy Shamsuddin told AFP that 300 people from two villages were homeless.

'Nine villages were severely affected in the region but we still don't have accurate figures,' he said.

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Red Cross spokesman Josue Anselmo said the volume of destruction in Wardak is 'impressive' with some villages destroyed by 80 to 100 percent.

In Kabul, authorities said at least five houses have collapsed killing an elderly man, while local hospitals said 10 people had been admitted with injuries.

The earthquake measured 5.5 on the Richter scale and was felt as far as Pakistan. But recent heavy rains and the vast number of mud brick homes was expected to exacerbate the casualty figures.

Five Red Cross trucks laden with supplies left this morning to the affected areas under a joint operation with the the Afghan Red Crescent Society, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

'The assessment is not finished. Therefore it is hard to give a precise number of casualties and the scale of destruction,' Anselmo said. He said shelter was most needed as people are afraid to return to their homes and are living in makeshift tents and under bridges.

Afghanistan's ruling Taliban have made a plea for relief from international agencies, although most evacuated the country last August after the

ICRC convoy heads for earthquake-hit Afghan town

KABUL, Feb 13: A Red Cross convoy carrying medical equipment and relief workers left the capital on Saturday for the eastern town of Mayden Sahr, where a strong earthquake has left at least 67 people dead, officials said.

'There are casualties and houses have collapsed but the problem with Afghanistan is communications,' a Red Cross spokesman told AFP.

Officials and medical sources said the death toll stood at 67, with a further 210 injured. But they warned the toll could rise as reports continued to filter in.

Radio Shariat said 'the condition of the people is bad. There is a lot of destruction and casualties ... the people need urgent help from international agencies.'

The earthquake, measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, struck at 6:35 pm (1405 GMT) on Thursday and was felt in Pakistan in the east and throughout the Panjsher valley to the north of Kabul.

Its epicentre was placed by the observatory in Peshawar at about 50 km south of Kabul in Logar, a province dotted with villages and mud brick hamlets.

The area is also the site of a major earthquake fault line which stretches from Iran to Pakistan and across Afghanistan's central and southern provinces.

In Kabul, doctors said more people were feared dead following reports from the injured.

'We've been told that quite a few children may have died,' Dr Aref from Carte Se Hospital, told AFP. He said most people had been treated for head trauma, arm and leg fractures.

Afghanistan is highly earthquake prone. Two earthquakes in February and June last year in the country's north east left some 8,500 people dead.—AFP

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14 FEB 1999

50 killed in earthquake

KABUL, Feb 12: At least 50 people were killed and a further 210 injured in a strong earthquake which struck eastern Afghanistan, officials and medical sources said on Friday.

Radio Shariat said the 50 were killed in just three villages near Mayden Sahr, about 60 kilometres west of Kabul in late Thursday's earthquake.

The Taliban authorities appealed for help from abroad.

'The condition of the people is bad. There is a lot of destruction and casualties ... the people need urgent help from international agencies,' the radio said.

Many areas had been affected, houses had collapsed and livestock

killed, with reports from remote rural areas still coming in.

'Casualty figures elsewhere were not known,' the radio said.

The Red Cross said it would rush medical supplies and doctors to the area on Saturday morning.

'There are casualties and houses have collapsed but the problem with Afghanistan is communications,' a Red Cross spokesman told AFP.

The earthquake, measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, struck at 6:35 pm local time (1405 GMT) on Thursday and was felt in Pakistan and throughout the Panjsher valley to the north of Kabul.

Its epicentre was placed by the observatory in Peshawar.—AFP

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Appeal for international aid

KABUL (AFP) - The governor of earthquake-hit Wardak province in eastern Afghanistan Sunday called for urgent international assistance, fearing more casualties from exposure and lack of shelter.

Mawlawi Shamsuddin urged the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the other relief agencies to rush immediate aid to the province, officials said.

Meanwhile, rescuers searched Sunday for 27 children still missing after a severe earthquake which hit east-

ern Afghanistan four days ago, killing at least 67 people, officials said.

Among the dead were 10 children who reportedly froze to death because they were too afraid to go back to their homes. In addition to the 67 dead, authorities said about 200 people, were injured in the earthquake that measured 5.5 on the Richter scale and was felt as far as Pakistan.

Heela Mand, a spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said a group had been formed to coordinate relief activities in the quake-

stricken provinces of Wardak and Logar. Officials of the Red Cross, the Afghan Red Crescent Society and the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent met here to assess the needs of the people.

'The Red Cross has sufficient supplies to distribute to the affected people,' Mand said. Five Red Cross trucks with relief goods reached some of the devastated villages Saturday.

Remote villages in Wardak and Logar badly needed shelter and medicines, travellers said.

UN medical aid for Afghanistan quake victims

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - In response to calls from authorities and the affected communities, UN agencies are currently contributing essential medical and shelter materials at the scene of Thursday's earthquake in the snowy Afghan mountains south of Kabul, states a Press release issued here on Monday.

Working in collaboration with the Afghan Office of Disaster Preparedness, the International Red Cross and International Federation of Red Cross societies and non-governmental organisations, UN staff have visited the site and agreed on a joint response to assist the affected villages.

Efforts continue to assess overall damage, at the same time that international organisations in Kabul are meeting the emergency needs, which so far have involved dealing with injuries

and exposure to the cold.

The earthquake, which registered 5.5 on the richter scale, struck an area in Wardak and Logar provinces, some 60 kms south of Kabul on Thursday evening. According to ICRC/IFRC assessments, some 35 people have been killed in 25 villages and hundreds injured. International agencies estimate that about 2,300 homes have been destroyed in the villages surveyed to date.

Casualties are thought to have been limited due to the fact a smaller tremor preceded the main quake, alerting people to leave their houses.

The World Health Organisation on Saturday sent emergency medical supplies to the affected area. Currently, the UN is moving additional tarpaulins and plastic sheeting from Kabul to provide emergency shelter

for the affected villages. Safe drinking water is also expected to be needed soon. While food aid is not considered a priority at this moment. The World Food Programme has made available several hundred tons of food which to be trucked to the area when needed.

Given the extent of the damage to housing, the UN is already planning a significant reconstruction programme.

UN international staff have been out of Afghanistan since August; however, UN humanitarian projects have continued throughout the country, managed by national staff. Following last week's technical observation mission to Kabul, the UN had planned to undertake further security assessments in the country as soon as possible to pave the way for the return of international humanitarian workers. In the meantime, the

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Taliban renew appeal for aid as quake toll rises to 75

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Taliban on Sunday renewed appeal for international aid for the earthquake affectees as the death toll from the quake in Afghanistan rose to 75.

Taliban charge d' affaires Maulvi Saeedur Rahman Haqqani said that the aid, reached so far, is very meagre and the affected people need more.

He said some 500 people have been injured while 7000 houses have either destroyed totally or damaged partially in the quake-hit areas. The quake, measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, struck three provinces-Maidan Wardag, Ghazni and Logar—on Thursday. The tremour were felt in many parts of Afghanistan and in Pakistan.

More than a dozen children were frozen to death, according to a report reached here. The children died in Chak district in Wardak province after strong

aftershocks forced thousands out of their homes. At least 44 aftershocks were felt Friday night alone in Chak, said the report.

Haqqani said he talked to UN Coordinator in Islamabad De Mule and urge for emergency aid. He said rescue operations are continued and feared that the number of dead may further rise.

ICRC, WHO and Red Cross teams in Kabul visited the affected areas for assessment of the losses and supplied medicines and essential commodities.

Plea for aid to Afghan quake victims

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The National Commission of Human Rights of Afghanistan has appealed to the international community to provide assistance to the affectees of the recent earthquake in Wardak and Logar provinces.

The commission, through a press release, quoted its official Abdul Naseer Khan who visited the affected areas as reporting that the extremely cold weather and delay in rescue operations had made the life of people miserable.

It felt that failure to deliver adequate food and health cover to the affectees could trigger another human disaster in war-ravaged Afghanistan. However, the commission lauded the assistance provided by the UN and ICRC to the affectees of the earthquake.

Aid workers reach Afghan quake victims

KABUL: The International Red Cross and the United Nations worked to get medicine, blankets and plastic sheeting to thousands of people left homeless by a powerful earthquake in central Afghanistan, said a United Nations statement issued Monday.

The Taliban's Radio Shariat puts the death toll in Thursday's earthquake at 100. Another 500 people were injured in the earthquake that recorded a preliminary magnitude of 5.5, according to the radio broadcast.

The earthquake rocked dozens of villages some 60 kilometers (36 miles) south of the Afghan capital of Kabul. Houses crumbled and those that were left standing were badly cracked and residents were afraid to sleep inside, said eyewitnesses.

A joint survey conducted by the red cross and the international red crescent revealed that some 2,300 homes were destroyed leaving thousands of people to endure the bitter cold outside.

The red cross put the death toll in the quake at 35 people.

"Casualties are thought to have been limited due to the fact that a smaller tremor preceded the main quake, alerting people to leave their homes," said the UN statement.—AP

DAWN

17 FEB 1999

Afghan quake victims without shelter

KABUL, Feb 16: Thousands of people, including children, are living without shelter in extreme cold after last week's earthquake, south of the Afghan capital Kabul, and need immediate international help, officials said on Tuesday.

The officials of the ruling Taliban militia said a survey by Taliban health authorities showed some 30 percent of children in the quake-hit Wardak province were without shelter and suffering from pneumonia.

According to Red Cross officials more than 30,000 people were affected by the earthquake in Wardak and Logar provinces last Thursday which measured 5.5 on the Richter scale.

Local officials said at least 60 people were killed and that the quake had devastated a large number of villages in mountains mostly covered with snow.

They said some 80 per cent of the people in the area were having to live and sleep on open ground. Many were suffering mentally because of the aftershocks which followed the quakel.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Red Cross Federation and the Afghan Red Crescent Society, have been distributing shelter as top priority, but some areas have not been surveyed yet.

ICRC official Rod Charters said: "The current humanitarian crisis stems from the heavy destruction of villages which has resulted in tens of thousands of people being in urgent need of shelter materials."

Taliban official Naem Haqmal said the help available so far was insufficient. "People are having problem here and we ask for urgent medical help. Establishing clinics in every village can be one solution."—Reuters

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Afghan opposition offer no comment on Osama

ISLAMABAD: Mystery continues to shroud the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden as anti-Taliban grouping Monday declined to comment on the reports that the Arab national has moved into the opposition-held areas in northern Afghanistan.

"I have no comments to offer," on the reports suggesting that Bin Laden is in the areas controlled by opposition Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA), said Dr Ghairat Baheer, an opposition spokesman.

The HIA is led by former Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Baheer, who is son-in-law and close aide of Hekmatyar, repeated his remarks when asked whether he was denying the report carried by Al-Hayat newspaper.

The Arabic daily said bin Laden had left the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar several days ago with 10 supporters, including the head of Egypt's Jihad group, Ayman el-Zawahri, and a dozen Taliban soldiers. He "momentarily" stopped in a northern Afghani area controlled by Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami faction, the newspaper said, quoting "in-

formed" Afghan sources.

Hekmatyar, who is the part of opposition grouping, has some supporters in Baghlan province locked in fighting with ruling Islamic Taliban movement. Taliban's

spokesman at the United Nations, Noorullah Zadran, in an interview, said that Bin Laden might have sought refuge with the opposition or might have left the country.—APP

AFP adds from Egypt: Osama bin Laden bankrolled Egypt's outlawed Al-Jihad Muslim fundamentalist group, Egyptian security officers told a military court on Monday.

"Naggar revealed to me very important secrets concerning Osama bin Laden and Ayman el-Zawahri," a captain with state security told the Huckstep military high court in northern Cairo where a group of militant leaders are on trial.

The officer was citing the testimony of Ahmad Ibrahim al-Naggar, one of 107 Al-Jihad members being tried on a number of charges, some of them relating to terrorism.

Naggar said his instructions came from Zawahri, head of the

group and right-hand man of Saudi millionaire bin Laden, who is suspected by Washington of masterminding US embassy bombings in east Africa in 1998.

Reuters add from Algiers: Osama had coordinated strategy with Algeria's most radical guerrilla faction, state-run Algerian radio said on Monday. The radio quoted a "repentant rebel" named Mohammad Berrached as saying that Bin Laden had several telephone contacts with Hassan Hattab, one of the main leaders of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA).

"I overheard Hattab receiving orders by telephone from Bin Laden," Berrached told the radio.

One piece of advice offered by Bin Laden to Hattab was to change the name of his group to al-Dawa wal Quital (Call and Struggle), the radio said.

"Bin Laden told Hattab in summer that the GIA name must be changed because the GIA became unpopular at home and abroad," Berrached was quoted by the radio as saying.

— sighted in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Osama bin Laden has been sighted inside Afghanistan by troops loyal to the anti-Taliban alliance, opposition spokesman Abdullah said Tuesday.

"It has been confirmed with me, categorically, that he is still in Afghanistan," Abdullah told AFP by satellite phone from outside the country.

No independent confirmation was available.

"Our security forces told me and I think this is beyond any doubt," he said. If confirmed, the sighting would be the first of Osama since the Taliban militia announced Saturday that he was missing and may have left the country.

Abdullah said Osama was travelling between four bases he recently established with about 60 Taliban troops in southern Afghanistan.

He said two bases had been constructed in the southern province of Kandahar, one in the southwest Farah province and the fourth in central Urozgan province.

"He also has hundreds of Taliban followers which he is using to build a popular base among the people and this includes dispensing humanitarian aid," Abdullah added.

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Opposition claims Osama seen in Afghanistan

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Taliban troops in southern Afghanistan.

He said two bases had been constructed in the southern province of Kandhar, one in the southwest Farah province and the fourth in central Urozgan province.

"He also has hundreds of Taliban followers which he is using to build a popular base among the people and this includes dispensing humanitarian aid," Abdullah added.

The alliance has been waging a bitter four-year civil war against the Taliban who now control 80 percent of the country and have provided bin Laden with sanctuary at the de facto base in Kandhar.

Washington has issued a five million dollar reward for the arrest and capture of bin Laden who it claims masterminded the bombing of two US embassies in east Africa last year.—AFP

Pakistan accused of interference in Afghanistan

TEHERAN (NNI) - The envoy of the deposed Afghan President, Khairkhwa Tuesday accused Pakistan of prolonging the Afghan war through interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

Addressing the sixth meeting of the Afghan Shiite and Sunni scholars in Tehran, he said none of the group or individual alone can rule Afghanistan. He termed unity among the Afghans as the only way for end of fighting in the country.

Khairkhwa thanked Iran for providing shelter to a large number of Afghan refugees and extending support to the Afghans during jihad.

The three-day meeting would review issues pertaining to national unity, programmes of the Afghan group and the role of the neighboring countries in strengthening of security in Afghanistan.

These issues were discussed in the previous meetings of the Shiite and Sunni Ulema of Afghanistan. However, the sixth meeting is given a special importance in the wake of current situation in Afghanistan.

The participating ulema hail from different areas of Afghanistan and represent different segments of the Afghan society. These ulema are well aware of the present day requirements of Afghanistan.

FRONTIER POST

24 FEB 1999

DAWN 17 FEB 1999

Opposition, Taliban swap POWs

KABUL, Feb 27: Afghanistan's hardline Taliban and its northern-based opponents on Saturday exchanged 22 prisoners through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Deputy ICRC chief in Afghanistan, Christophe Ludei, said the religious militia and the Afghan ex-defence minister Ahmad Shah Masood simultaneously released 11 prisoners.

The opposition prisoners were transferred to Masood-controlled Bagram airbase, 50 kilometers north of here, by an ICRC plane which brought back the same number of Taliban prisoners to Kabul, he said.

Some of the released prisoners were sick, Ludei said.

"ICRC facilitates the simultaneous release of prisoners by the two sides through its logistic and communications support," he said, adding that the agency was not involved in the negotiations.

He said both sides had exchanged a total of 62 prisoners since January.—AFP

DAWN

28 FEB 1999

Osama sighted in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - Alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden has been sighted inside Afghanistan by troops loyal to the anti-Taliban alliance, opposition spokesman Abdullah said Tuesday.

"It has been confirmed with me, categorically, that he is still in Afghanistan," Abdullah told AFP by satellite phone from outside the country.

No independent confirmation was immediately available.

"Our security forces told me and I think this is beyond any doubt," he said.

If confirmed, the sighting would be the first of bin Laden since the Taliban militia announced Saturday that the Saudi dissident was missing and may have left the country.

Abdullah said bin Laden was traveling between four bases he recently established with about 60 Taliban troops in southern Afghanistan.

He said two bases had been constructed in the southern province of Kandahar, one in the southwest Farah province and the fourth in central Urozgan province.

FRONTIER POST

27 FEB 1999

Laden sighted in Afghanistan: opposition

ISLAMABAD: Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden has been sighted inside Afghanistan by troops loyal to the anti-Taliban alliance, opposition spokesman Abdullah said Tuesday.

"It has been confirmed with me, categorically, that he is still in

Afghanistan," Abdullah told AFP by satellite phone from outside the country.

No independent confirmation was immediately available. "Our security forces told me and I think this is beyond any doubt," he said.—AFP

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL
17 FEB 1999

Afghan opposition captures key district

ISLAMABAD, Feb 1: Afghanistan's opposition Shia Hezb-i-Wahdat faction said on Monday its fighters had captured a key area in the north of the country from the Taliban.

Mohammad Mohaqiq, a senior Wahdat official, told Reuters the district of Dara-i-Suf in Samangan province fell to his men on Monday morning after heavy clashes.

There has been no independent information and it was not immediately possible to reach the Taliban for comment.

Dara-i-Suf lies on a secondary road from Bamiyan, the former Wahdat bastion in central Afghanistan, to the key northern town of Mazar-i-Sharif.

Mohaqiq said his men had attacked the Taliban from the south of Dara-i-Suf and took the district after several hours of heavy fighting.

The Taliban, who control most of Afghanistan, captured Bamiyan last September.

Mohaqiq said the opposition still held Yakawlang district to the west of Bamiyan, which he said was seized nearly three weeks ago.

Wahdat, part of an anti-Taliban alliance, controls isolated areas close to Bamiyan.

Ahmad Shah Masood, the veteran opposition commander whose forces were driven from the capital Kabul by the Taliban two years ago, has been using hit-an-run tactics against the Taliban in the northeast. —Reuters

DAWN

02 FEB 1999

Opposition captures Taliban-held town

ISLAMABAD, Feb 25: Afghanistan's opposition forces have captured a key district in central Bamiyan province after fierce fighting with Taliban troops, the private Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported on Thursday.

It said Yawkowlang, about 100 kilometers west of the city of Bamiyan, fell to the anti-Taliban alliance after fighters from the Hezb-i-Wahdat factions launched a "surprise" attack on Wednesday.

The opposition troops, who had taken refuge in the mountains after the Islamic militia's advance in the area in September, overran Taliban defences in three hours of fighting, the report said.

At least three people were killed and five injured, it said adding the Taliban launched a counter-offensive early Thursday and heavy fighting was still raging.

No independent confirmation of the report was immediately available.

A Taliban spokesman in Kandahar, militia base in southern Afghanistan, said he was "unaware" of any fighting in the central province, AIP said later. —AFP

DAWN

26 FEB 1999

Taliban claim killing 16 rival fighters

ISLAMABAD, Feb 8: The Taliban repulsed an opposition attack in the northwestern province of Faryab on Monday, killing 16 opposition fighters, state radio said.

The broadcast by the Voice of Shariat radio, monitored in Islamabad, said 15 other fighters from the forces of Ahmad Shah Masood had been wounded and nine captured in the fighting at Kata Qala.

"Their attempt to disturb the normal life of the people was defeated with the help of the local population," it said.

Last Wednesday, the Taliban said it had defeated an opposition attack in Pashtunkot district in central Faryab, killing eight fighters.

Anti-Taliban forces have recently reported a number of clashes in Faryab province, which the Taliban captured last year. —Reuters

DAWN

06 FEB 1999

Taliban retake district in central Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD, Feb 26: The Taliban militia has recaptured the district of Yawkowlang in central Afghanistan, two days after losing it to opposition forces; the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported Friday.

The district was retaken by the militia late Thursday in a counter-attack as fighters of Hezb-i-Wahdat faction retreated into the nearby mountains, the Pakistan-based private information service said.

Several soldiers on both sides were killed in the fighting and a rival commander Ahmad Shah was captured by the Islamic militia troops, AIP said.

The fall of Yawkowlang in Bamiyan province to the opposition was reported by AIP on Thursday.

Bamiyan, a province which is mainly populated by minority Hazara community, was taken by the Taliban militia last year.—AFP

BRAHIMI: United Nations peace envoy on Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi is beginning a fresh round of talks with Afghan groups over the weekend following a series of meetings he has had with Pakistani officials and diplomats of Six plus Two Group countries in Islamabad, reports APP.

An official of the United Nations said on Friday that Brahimi will visit Kabul over the weekend to hold talks with Taliban authorities.

Brahimi, who arrived here on Sunday last as part of his continuing shuttle diplomacy to broker elusive peace in war-ravaged country,

already had a preliminary meeting with Taliban's ambassador to Pakistan Maulvi Saeed-ur-Rehman Haqqani a few days back.

On his way back from Kabul, the UN official may stop in Peshawar and meet Afghan leaders including former President Sibghatullah Mujadeddi, Pir Sayed Ahmed Gilani and others.

Earlier, the UN diplomat was scheduled to visit Kandahar, Taliban's headquarters in southwestern Afghanistan. However, the official said, Brahimi would now proceed to Kabul without disclosing the reasons for change in his schedule.

Brahimi, a former Algerian foreign minister, is the first foreign dignitary who has had a rare audience with Taliban's paramount leader, Mulla Mohammad Omar, in Kandahar in October last which led to the release of all Iranian nationals taken prisoners by Taliban after its chain of victories in northern Afghanistan.

The UN official's tentative itinerary does not envisage his visit to opposition-controlled areas. However, he may have meetings with the leaders of anti-Taliban alliance in Iran on the second leg of his visit to the regional states.

Brahimi had met with Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz and discussed matters relating to Afghan problem.

The UN diplomat also plans to visit Iran, Russia and Central Asian Republics, according to officials.

Taliban retake central district from Opposition

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - The Taliban militia has recaptured the district of Yawkowlang in central Afghanistan, two days after losing it to opposition forces, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported on Friday.

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NATION

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Exports to Afghanistan

REVERSING the earlier decision embodied in the Trade Policy for the current fiscal year, the government has allowed free export of Pakistani goods to Afghanistan against payment in Pakistan rupees. The Trade Policy announced at the beginning of the year had permitted export only against foreign exchange. The trade in Pakistan currency is now authorized as a consequence of the recommendation of the Export Development Committee which met the other day in Islamabad under the chairmanship of the Finance Minister, Mr Ishaq Dar. The existing practice of payment in foreign currency has been creating unnecessary impediments because Afghanistan, ravaged by a civil war, has no financial infrastructure and payment for Pakistani exports in foreign currency was being made either through third countries or by purchasing the required currencies from the open (black) market. In either case the cost rose heavily and Pakistan did not generally fare well in competition.

Since under the new dispensation payment will be made in rupees, sale of goods to Afghan importers will not be considered as exports. Consequently such goods will not qualify for duty drawbacks, or for exemption from excise duty and sales tax nor will these be entitled to export refinancing facility. Similarly sales from bonds, being operated under different temporary importation schemes, will not be treated as exports. However, exports to Afghanistan will be against regular shipping bills. Which means that the transportation of these goods will be through authorized transport and permitted routes with full identification of exporters and importers. This will ensure

payment of all taxes and reduce the chances of smuggling. The government would have no objection if exports to Afghanistan find their way into Central Asian Republics or any other country.

Selective exports against rupee payment would help boost production, especially in those industries which have idle capacity and use indigenous raw materials. The items which will specially benefit include matches, soaps and detergents, rock salt, textiles and products, cement, sugar and pharmaceuticals. Some items with substantial import contents, such as edible oil, tea, certain pharmaceuticals, etc, are in great demand in Afghanistan and beyond. Some special procedure will have to be devised to restrict their export under the new mechanism.

The main advantage to the country under the new dispensation will come in the form of higher production and reduced cost. Additional production to be stimulated by the supplementary demand originating from Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries would yield economies of scale, thus reducing per unit cost. It will generally improve Pakistan's competitive ability in the international market. Increased outflow of goods may provide a temptation to smuggle out goods not otherwise allowed. To preempt this possibility customs vigilance will have to be strengthened. Total elimination of smuggling through this porous border is a near-impossibility, but there is no escape from strict enforcement of the rules and procedures relating to shipping bills if the chances of unauthorized passage of goods are to be kept at the minimum.

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Dispatches

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diet, this would be the perfect way to disguise his murder.

"I listened to the police and their discussion, and they had a huge debate on whether or not they thought it could have been murder," Le Duc later said. "Green's Hotel is a center for all sorts of dealers in drugs, weapons, seedy-looking characters. It has a reputation of being a place of interesting characters. Also a source of potentially ruthless people."

Even if Mavroleon wasn't murdered, he'd been playing a very dangerous game. After dark on August 20, the United States had fired several dozen cruise missiles launched from battleships in the Arabian Sea—at a complex of military camps in the Afghan mountains. The camps, located in a remote area near a town called Khost, had originally been a mujahideen base during the Soviet occupation, which lasted from 1979 to 1989. Later they became training centers for fighters who went off to smaller conflicts, such as those in Bosnia and Kashmir.

In 1996 the camps were taken over by a wealthy Saudi businessman named Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden used the camps to train terrorists in what he considered a global jihad against American imperialism, and in early August members of his network allegedly detonated two truck bombs in front of the American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Hundreds were killed, and within days the U.S. State Department declared that it had almost irrefutable evidence of bin Laden's involvement.

Bin Laden was beyond the reach of international law, however, because he was under the jurisdiction of the Taliban, the ultra-fundamentalist coalition that controls at least 90 percent of Afghanistan. Instead, the U.S. government decided on missile strikes, but bin Laden was well away from the camps during the attack. In the wake of the bombing, two Western relief workers were gunned down—one of them fatally—by Taliban supporters in Kabul, and in Peshawar the price on American heads immediately rose to \$16,000, a reward supposedly offered by bin Laden himself.

It was into this volatile mix that Carlos strode. What CBS was desperate for—what every network in the world was desperate for—was footage of the destroyed camps. There were a number of problems, though. First of all, the Taliban weren't letting foreigners into Afghanistan, which meant that journalists had to sneak in through the mountains from Pakistan. The Pakistan government wasn't allowing foreigners near the border—part

ally released him. What Saad did not know—but would later learn—was that Mavroleon was from an extremely wealthy European family, that he had gone to Eton and Harvard, that he was engaged to a wealthy Iranian exile, that he had worked on Wall Street, and that he had fought in Afghanistan with the mujahideen.

And now here he was in a \$15 hotel room, dead.

At first glance, it looked to Saad like an overdose. Peshawar had been a staging area for mujahideen Resistance forces during the Russian occupation and was now a major conduit for drugs and weapons flowing out of Afghanistan: there was nothing new about young Westerners turning up dead at cheap hotels. In addition, Saad found a bloody syringe on the floor, and a blackened Afghan coin with a hole in it lay on a nearby table—junkies who want to keep their teeth from staining will put a coin between their lips when they smoke. Saad immediately

summoned a local doctor, who gave the body a quick examination and concluded that Mavroleon had probably died of a heroin overdose.

Saad then called Carol Le Duc, a genteel, middle-aged woman who acted as an unofficial British liaison in Peshawar. Le Duc arrived around 11 p.m. and confirmed that Mavroleon was a British national. She agreed that it looked like an overdose, but it bothered her that there were no tracks on Mavroleon's arms (a tiny needle mark was found later) and that there was no tourniquet.

It crossed her mind that maybe someone had entered the room and forced him to inject himself. It crossed her mind that if Carlos was an ad-

This would be a very good way to kill him, Carol Le Duc reasoned after seeing Mavroleon's dead body, a method that was almost impossible to detect.



NATIVE SON

From top: Carlos with his mother, Glöconda, his two half-brothers, Gianfranco and Gianluca, and his brother, Nicholas (standing), in May 1997; Nicholas, Carlos, and their father, Blosy, in Greece, August 1998; with his fiancée, Tanfraz Fazalpour, in Greece, August 1998.

Afghanistan: civilization remains mired in war

By Paula R. Newberg

LOS ANGELES: It is testament to our collective indifference that we now measure Afghanistan's war not in months or years but in decades. Two decades of war have brought devastation and despair to Afghanistan and turmoil to its neighbours. Suddenly, the 30 Years War isn't so hard to imagine.

Ten years ago, the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan. After almost a decade of war, most of the 5,000 troops remaining in the country crossed the Friendship Bridge into Uzbekistan, leaving behind physical destruction and political turmoil. For the Soviet Union, the Geneva accords that required its withdrawal signalled the beginning of the end: two years later, it dissolved, overburdened by the costs of military engagement and public disenchantment.

For Afghanistan, the accords simply ended another phase in a seemingly endless war. The Mujahideen's backers all turned away, leaving the country to cope on its own. Anti-Soviet battles turned into internecine fighting, faction against faction, with no thought to human privation. As fragmentation turned into state failure, the first and most tragic consequence of war was the loss of Afghanistan as a viable state.

When a state fails, nothing works. Roads, water supply, food, healthcare — the necessities of life become heavy burdens. Worse still, the basic attributes of communities, the life-line of civil society that sustained Afghans

through the first decade of hostilities, whether at home or in refugee camps, have been shattered by continuing combat, in which only fighters and profiteers have a stake.

War remains an indelible feature of the Afghan landscape and, by extension, of the region. Afghanistan's fate is now inexorably linked to nuclearized South Asia and energy-rich but cash-poor Central Asia. The paradoxes of war have made Afghanistan, which barely functions, a looking glass through which its neighbours see, and seal, their fates.

Buried beneath the physical detritus and mortality rates are old histories arrayed around newly articulated disputes. Since the Taliban movement took control of most of the country in 1996, sectarian and ethnic schisms have returned as major elements of life. Splits between urban and rural sensibilities, masked as religious or ideological preference, have been renewed. The primacy of military struggle is underscored daily by a regimen of edicts that allow virtually no free choice. The Cold War has been replaced by contests between Islamic activists and secularists; modernists and traditionalists; Shias and Sunnis; and Pushtuns, Uzbeks, Tajiks and Hazaras.

These are all disputes the international community halfheartedly condemns and rarely acts to correct: the world would like the problem of Afghanistan to go away. Petition drives and bold statements from Western leaders publicize the fact of gender discrimination,

but rarely examine the broader human-rights protections needed to reverse it. Iranian leaders condemn the Taliban as obscurantist but would prefer that Afghan refugees go home.

Uzbekistan has long backed northern Afghan leaders, who allow some modernism, but has erected a virtual wall to ensure that Afghanistan's travails do not cross its border, and is busy repositioning itself in an emerging security architecture for Central Asia. Turkmenistan, still convinced a trans-Afghan gas pipeline can make its way towards Pakistan, maintains a neutrality towards Afghanistan that leaves it at some remove from serious diplomacy.

Pakistan remains mired in a victim's vocabulary: daily government statements lament spillovers. The region's greatest vulnerabilities come from the twin fates of the failed Afghan state and a Pakistani state whose citizens fear their neighbour's failure.

Afghanistan suffers from an interplay of military conquest, civilian repression and population displacement. Transnational political parties, which grew during the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan, have attained new heights.

It is in revived politics that improvement, if not salvation, lies. Without open political discourse, governments may survive but states disintegrate. Without civil politics, confrontation centres-stage, and governments cannot resolve conflict or address its underlying causes. Without politics, policy is reduced to

managing low expectations and achieving even lower results.

In the name of future Afghan politics, then, diplomacy is critical. In acknowledgment of the anniversary of Friendship Bridge, Afghan factions met last week in Turkmenistan to discuss, again, ceasefires, prisoner exchanges and other issues that contribute to diplomacy but cannot substitute for it. This month, diplomats representing Afghanistan's neighbours may meet in Uzbekistan. Under the umbrella of the UN, and together with representatives of Russia and the US, they will again consider Afghanistan's plight and their own choices.

They are unlikely to revisit history, though a simple bow to the past could inspire some humility. Instead, they will balance short-term profit against long-term gain. With luck, the lure of future oil and gas pipelines will override the familiarity of low-intensity interventions. If Afghans are lucky, rational fears for the integrity of the region will finally bring an end to arms shipments, fuel supplies and fighters to the factions that have rent the fabric of Afghan society.

Once again, they will have the chance to revive legitimate political discourse as the only way to resolve Afghanistan's conflicts and its neighbours' troubles. If they grasp the moment, diplomacy just might prevail. If not, we will be counting conflict in decades well into the new century. —Dawn/LAT-WP News Service (c) Los Angeles Times.

DAWN 25 FEB 1999

Russian military, polity bear scars of Afghan fiasco

Alexei Vassiliev

Ten years ago the last Soviet soldier crossed the Amu Darya into Uzbekistan to end Moscow's ill-fated decision to prop up a socialist regime in Kabul. The soldier in question was the commander of the 40th Army, Gen. Boris Gromov, who thought he was fighting a just war for almost ten years.

Today the world is a very different place from what it was at the beginning of the campaign. The Soviet Union is no more and Afghanistan now borders a cluster of Central Asian republics all groping for an acceptable model of political structure. Former Mujahideen, like Ahmed Shah Masood, who at that time were fighting against Soviet troops with Pakistani and American weapons, are currently receiving assistance from the north in their struggle against the Pakistan-backed Taliban.

The former arch opponent of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, Iran, was recently on the verge of launching a military intervention in Afghanistan to protect ethnic minorities from the depredations of the Pashtun majority represented by the Taliban.

The United States, which with the help of CIA directed thousands of Muslim volunteers from various countries in their war against the 'atheist' government in Kabul and Soviet troops, is horrified by the Frankenstein of its own creation.

The world has changed but the questions about the main reasons for the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan remain.

Some of the factors behind the military intervention can be clearly identified now. The first among them was the gerontocracy. The Kremlin was run by a bunch of old men who had lost touch with reality and did not understand the world around them. The most important of these old men, Leonid Brezhnev, was so hurt by the detention and subsequent death of his friend and ally, Noor Mohammad Taraki, that he personally gave the nod to military intervention.

The second factor was a messianic idea of spreading socialism across the globe. Therefore when power in Afghanistan fell into the hands of young Marxist revolutionaries who voiced their intention to mould the Afghan society to the Soviet pattern, there appeared an additional incentive to keep the old di-

lapidated political system and ideology intact.

From the Kremlin insiders' point of view, the regime of the young radicals in Kabul had to be kept alive at any cost. The idea that the invasion in Afghanistan was part of some grand strategy to advance towards warm seas, to the Arabian Gulf in particular, has not been confirmed by any document from the Afghan war.

The irony of history is that, for some time, the Soviet model of development was a viable one and achieved remarkable results. On the threshold of the '70s these results were in particular salient in the Central Asian countries which made a dizzying socio-economic pirouette from feudalism to modernism. This was exactly what prompted young, impatient Marxists to stage their own revolution in Kabul. In actual fact, by then this economic, social and political societal model had started to mal-function both in Central Asia and the rest of the then Soviet Union republics.

The grim memories of the Afghan war are very much alive in Russian society, the wounds are still bleeding. Between 1979 and 1989, 14,000 Soviet soldiers were killed, 50,000 were wounded and 300 were missing. All in all about 750,000 men went through Afghanistan, among them such prominent actors of the present Russian political scene as vice-

speaker of the State Duma, Sergei Baburin; former Russian vice president and present governor of the Kursk region; Gen. Alexander Rutskoi; former Russian presidential candidate and present governor of Krasnoyarsk (region), Alexander Lebed; State Duma member Gen. Gromov; and many others.

One of the main conclusions drawn by the former war veterans is that Russia had to abandon the idea of ever repeating the possibility of carrying out any military intervention beyond its borders. A majority of those who were in Afghanistan and saw how much Afghan people differ from Russians in a civilisational and religious sense, on returning home, began to respect Islam and Muslim traditions. They realised it was necessary to find out ways of cooperation and establish dialogue with Muslim states.

Gen. Gromov believes he was merely discharging his military duty by fighting the war against the Mujahideen in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, he helped stop the war in Afghanistan and that was his biggest achievement. According to him, pull-out of troops was under preparation in 1988 despite the Najibullah government's vehement opposition to the withdrawal.

To meet the deadline, Gromov, in a span of just 15 days, withdrew 40,000 men without losses from Kabul to Termez through the Salang Pass in winter conditions. Recalls Gromov: "I do not think the Soviet army lost the war in Afghanistan because we had no order to win. The 40th army, of which I was commander, was very mighty — there was not a single comparable regiment in the Soviet armed forces in the post-war period. It was possible to solve any task, but there was no such order."

Equally interesting are the views of Leonid Shebarshin, the former head of the KGB First Principal Intelligence Directorate: "We betrayed Najibullah. After the Soviet troops were withdrawn, the Najibullah government proved its vitality more than once."

It is clear now that exactly at the moment Afghanistan was close to a peaceful settlement, at least a partial one, Russia's recognition of the Afghan opposition delivered a death-blow to the Kabul government. The finale is known. Russia has not only lost her friend, it has lost beyond recall every possibility to influence events in the region."

20 FEB 1999
THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

Afghanistan's de facto capital returning to normal business

By Rahimullah Yusufzai

KANDAHAR is now the de facto capital of Afghanistan, having upstaged the de jure capital, Kabul, primarily due to the fact that the supreme Taliban leader, Mulla Mohammad Omar, is based there. Every decree issued by him in his capacity as Amirul Momineen (Commander of the Faithful) comes out from Kandahar and anyone wanting to do business with the ruling Taliban has to travel to this city of about half a million souls. Many Kandaharis would tell you that their city was Afghanistan's capital prior to Kabul and that it had regained its old status, at least for the time-being.

Kandahar's roads are still largely unpaved and every passing vehicle, of which there is no dearth due to negligible government taxes and custom duties, contributes to the dust that forever engulfs the city. The Taliban, now in power in Kandahar for about four and a half years, have been able to build only one city road that is proposed to link up with the airport. In fact, this metalled road goes on to Spin Buldak and the Pakistani border town of Chaman. The Pakistan government had provided some money and road-building machinery to the Taliban for carrying out repairs of the Chaman-Kandahar-Herat Road but the promised amount couldn't be given in full, apparently due to Islamabad's own financial constraints.

The Kandahar airport has become fairly busy, receiving regular flights of the Ariana Afghan Airlines from Dubai, UAE, and from Kabul, Herat and Jalalabad. Beside Ariana, some planes are occasionally chartered

from other airlines to fly cargo from Dubai to Kandahar.

The cargo is mainly consumer goods which eventually find their way to Pakistan. The UN and ICRC also regularly fly to Kandahar, providing a much-needed, efficient and quick air service to their own staffers, aid workers, diplomats and journalists. The airport is also used by the Afghan military transport aircraft and helicopters, ferrying Taliban leaders and fighters, including dead and wounded. Sometimes, civilians are also flown in military planes to far-away destinations like Mazar-i-Sharif, Shiberghan and Herat.

Some construction activity is visible in the city, both at the official and non-official level. The Taliban administration is building a huge Eidgah in the foothills on Kandahar's outskirts,

KANDAHAR

AR DIARY

the city's civic body is constructing a big three-storey market on a place which was heavily damaged during the recent war, and the traders and repatriating refugees are rebuilding their shops and houses. The reconstruction activity has generated some much-needed jobs and Afghans from many places, mostly Kabul, have flocked to Kandahar in search of employment. Almost all Kandaharis invariably complain about unemployment and economic problems. Many of them also believe that the Taliban by refusing to share power and decentralise authority were gradually losing popular support.

Many pleasant changes are visible on the way to Kandahar and in the city itself. The checkpoints, which earned notoriety for the mujahideen

and were probably the biggest cause of their unpopularity, are now a thing of the past. Rarely does one see gunmen now that the Taliban have disarmed the people and outlawed carrying of guns. The civic services in Kandahar do work and electricity supply has increased. Even if the government departments aren't very responsive to the needs of the people, it is a fact that the administration is almost fully operational. Still every person wants to approach Mulla Omar directly, as explained by the crowd of male and female applicants outside his Kandahar office every day, because it is their belief that they would get a quicker and better response if they are able to reach the top Taliban man. Many Kandaharis point out that most Taliban officials are dismissive of their complaints and it is thus their endeavour to approach Mulla Omar, who is known for his kind-heartedness and is keen to improve the Taliban public image.

Madrissas are Kandahar's fastest-growing institutions. Many new madrissas that have come up are named after Taliban leaders who were killed in battle. Senior Taliban spokesman, Mulla Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil, pointed out that they can now easily use the several thousand Taliban studying in Kandahar's numerous madrissas in emergencies and deploy them to reinforce frontlines. The greater attention to madrissas by the Taliban is understandable as they themselves are a product of these religious schools. But all this means there is less money available for the conventional schools, which are inadequate to meet local needs and are in a miserable condition.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

25 FEB 1999

NATION 15 FEB 1999

'Peace talks sans Afghan people meaningless'

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR – The Executive Committee of the Great National United Islamic Front of Afghanistan has urged the 6+2 countries to include the peace loving and patriotic Afghans or their representatives in its meeting scheduled to be held at Tashkent for solution to the Afghan conflict. The committee observed peace talks sans Afghan people are meaningless.

This demand was made in a resolution adopted in the meeting held with party's head for Foreign Affairs at Peshawar on Sunday. Through its resolution, adopted in the meeting held with party's head for Foreign Affairs at Peshawar on Sunday. Through its resolution, the meeting diverted attention towards the existing situation of Afghanistan and reaffirmed its stand for finding out a negotiated solution to the conflict.

In this connection, the meeting reminded about the declaration of Bonn, Germany Conference which had asked for an end to every sort of interference in Afghanistan as well as for governing an emergency meeting of the traditional

loya jirga. The meeting was of the firm belief that only through such steps, the Afghan conflict could be resolved which become a serious issue in all over this region.

Addressing the meeting, Shehzada Masud demanded of the 6+2 countries to focus their attention on those patriotic and peace loving democratic Afghans who since a long had been struggling to pull their motherland out of existing crisis through political ways.

He said that since withdrawal of the former Soviet troops from Afghanistan, some 10 years ago, they had been demanding an end to every sort of foreign interference in affairs of their motherland.

He said that in this connection, responsibility also rests with the UN Security Council to take practical steps for resolving of the matter. First the UN must stop interference in affairs of Afghanistan and then help them in finding out ways and means for restoration of complete peace in their motherland which is possible with transfer of power to an acceptable and impartial interim government and organising of the national army.

UN criticises Taliban, opposition

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR – Shehzada Masud, a leader of the Great National United Islamic Front of Afghanistan has said that jihadic and militia forces have lost credibility among the war affected Afghans and it is crystal clear that these forces are not sincere to a negotiated solution to the conflict nor its leadership are capable of governing the country.

In a Press release issued here on Sunday, Shehzada Masud said that as a result of more than 20-year long imposed fighting in Afghanistan, its people were scattered and they lost their united leadership. During this period, beside the former communists, the je-

hadic and militia forces have also indulged themselves in brutalities against the war affected people and as a result of such tactics, now these jihadic and militia forces have lost credibility among the Afghans and they couldn't lead or govern the country at this stage, he remarked.

Beside killing the innocent people, the communists, jihadic and militia forces are also responsible for destruction and collapse of the established institutions and are selling away the valuable assets of Afghanistan, he said. Similarly, all of them have proved themselves as puppets in hands of those foreign countries and forces who are involved in interferences in affairs of Afghanistan.

Afghan factions end first round of talks

ALMATY, Feb 11: Representatives from Afghanistan's ruling Taliban and opposition forces led by Ahmad Shah Masood have completed their first round of talks in Ashkhabad, diplomatic sources in the Turkmen capital said on Thursday.

The two sides reached an agreement on prisoner exchange and cease-fire conditions, Interfax cited unnamed sources as saying. That report could not be immediately confirmed.

Representatives for the Taliban, led by Deputy Foreign Minister Maulvi Abdur Rahman Zahid, arrived in Ashkhabad on Wednesday for the negotiations, Faisal Tirmizi, a diplomat in the Pakistan Embassy in Turkmenistan, told AFP.

Masood's representatives arrived on Tuesday for the peace talks, which were organised by the United Nations' special mission on Afghanistan, Tirmizi said.

Ashkhabad is considered neutral territory by both sides as Turkmenistan has maintained an even-handed policy toward the Taliban and its opponents.

The resource-rich Central Asian republic is keen for Afghanistan's warring factions to reach a peace agreement so Turkmenistan can begin plans to build a natural gas export pipeline through Afghanistan to Pakistan.—AFP

DAWN

72 FEB 1999

NATION 01 FEB 1999

Taliban dismantle 34 heroin labs in Nangrahar

By Ismail Khan

PESHAWAR: The Taliban swooped on heroin laboratories 70 kilometres southeast of here following a decree by their supreme leader Mulla Muhammad Omar to dismantle "hidden nests which convert opium gum into heroin".

"Those existed hidden nests (secret laboratories) which convert opium gum into heroin must be dismantled," the short order signed by Mulla Omar said. The decree was read out by Abdul Hamid Akhundzada, high commissioner for drug control before a group of Pakistani and western journalists at Jalalabad's Spin Ghar Hotel Friday. He said that teams had been constituted in accordance with the decree to locate and dismantle all heroin manufacturing laboratories in Afghanistan. "We have begun our operation and as a first step dismantled 34 heroin laboratories in two districts of Afghanistan's eastern Nangrahar province." A similar operation in Kandahar's Maiwand and Ghoarak districts will follow suit, Akhundzada said.

United Nations Drug Control Programme hailed the operation, describing it a major breakthrough. "For us, this is a major breakthrough. We have been encouraging the Taliban to take action," the UNDCP Jalalabad's Programme Officer and Officer Incharge, Muhammad Naseeb told The News. "It is evident now that the Taliban are serious about and mean business," he said.

Akhundzada said it took them one month to locate the heroin lab-

oratories through their intelligence network while the operation to dismantle these "hidden nests" began last Sunday. The Taliban's drug control chief said in all 34 heroin laboratories had been dismantled in Khugyani and Achin districts of Nangrahar close to the Pak-Afghan border. "There was no resistance," Nangrahar's police chief Maulavi Abdul Ta'ha said. Fourteen people, all local workers at the laboratories, have been picked up and put behind the bars, pending their trial before the shariah court, Akhundzada said.

Abdul Hameed Akhundzada reiterated time and again that the Taliban's operation against illicit drug manufacturing did not come about under international pressure. "Neither have we done this because of international pressure nor are we obliged to do so. We have done all this because we believe that this is a dangerous stuff and is harmful to human life. This is not a time-limited operation, it will continue in accordance with the orders of Amirul Momineen, Mulla Muhammad Omar."

Akhundzada however, made it clear that the Taliban had no immediate plans to ban poppy in Afghanistan owing to people's economic difficulties and lack of alternative means of livelihood. "We want to ban poppy cultivation gradually. We can't do it in one go. People will face a lot of problems. Assistance or no assistance, this is the plan of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan," he said, while lamenting that international community has been slow in providing assistance to the Taliban to control drug

trafficking and provide rehabilitation and drug treatment facilities to the people. He said that the UNDCP has launched three pilot projects in Afghanistan, including two districts in Kandahar and one in Nangrahar to divert poppy growers to other profitable crops. "We will see whether these are successful." "People will happily give up poppy if given alternative means of livelihood," he said.

The UNDCP official said the Taliban have assured to help reduce poppy cultivation by 50% next year, bringing down to zero level by the year 2000.

He said that most of heroin manufactured was smuggled back to Pakistan through the adjoining tribal areas, through Iran or through the former Soviet central Asian republics via Afghanistan's Badakhshan province. The chemicals used in heroin manufacturing came from Pakistan, he said, while one of the main ingredients, acetic anhydride came from India and Germany.

Later, the journalists were driven for three hours on a rugged, bumpy road to the mountainous Och Bandar in Achin district to show them the dismantled heroin laboratories and were allowed to meet the workers arrested during the operation at the Achin district jail. "We are workers and were paid Rs 500 a day," Ghainullah, a worker in his late thirties said. He said that owners of these laboratories were Afridi tribals of the adjoining Pakistani tribal territory and had fled, apparently getting wind of the impending operation.

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

20 FEB 1999

Mystery epidemic kills dozens in Afghanistan

From Dr JASSIM TAQUI

ISLAMABAD - Afghanistan has asked the World Health Organisation for help dealing with an epidemic that is killing dozens of people a day near the Tajik border in Afghanistan, a UN official disclosed here.

Due to the gravity of the situation and fear that the epidemic might spread into more areas, the WHO is sending an urgent medical help to Afghanistan to help the authorities cope with the alarming situation.

The illness, thought perhaps to be plague or cholera, has spread during the last week through several impoverished villages in Badakhshan mountains of Afghanistan.

A lack of qualified medical personnel and diagnostic equipment has complicated efforts to identify the disease. As a result dozens of people are dying every-

day.

The UN medical team would first land in Dushambe, Tajikistan. From there, the team will travel by helicopter to as many as four affected villages.

Afghanistan is also seeking help from Pakistan since it does not have the facilities to handle the deteriorating situation. However, the help is rather slow given the tense situation in Afghanistan and the security aspects as well.

Plague is typically spread by rodents or other small animals. Untreated, it is often fatal, but it can be treated with antibiotics.

Latest statistics show that over 2,000 people are affected by the epidemic. About 150 people have so far died due to lack of medical treatment.

Symptoms of the epidemic are fever, cough, pain, vomiting and diarrhea, with elderly women and children the worst affected.

AFP adds: A "mystery disease" has killed 150 people in remote villages in northeast Afghanistan, a UN spokesman said Friday.

Experts from the World Health Organization (WHO) plan to attempt to travel to the villages in the Darwaz region in the next few days, UN spokesman Fred Eckhard said.

Last week officials in Darwaz told the WHO that 2,000 people were suffering from the illness, and that 150 of them had died.

Symptoms of the sickness include fever, cough, aches, vomiting and diarrhea, he said.

The WHO plans to send two epidemiologists to Dushanbe, in neighboring Tajikistan. From there they will attempt to reach the affected villages, he said.

The villages, located in narrow valleys between high mountains, are normally accessible only by foot or on donkey, and take 10 days to reach, Eckhard said.

21 FEB 1999

FRONTIER POST

Disease kills 350 in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD, Feb 18: A mystery disease has killed over 350 people in northeast Afghanistan and threatens the lives of hundreds more, opposition sources said on Thursday.

The deaths were reported in four districts of Badakhshan province, on the border with China and Tajikistan, in areas controlled by forces opposed to the ruling Taliban militia.

The Darwaz district is worst affected by the disease which causes high fever, severe diarrhoea and shivering, the sources said. They called for urgent remedial action.

"It is not cholera, not typhoid, it is a very odd disease," one opposition official said. "We have never heard about it here in the past."

Badakhshan is one of the poorest and most remote mountainous areas of Afghanistan. Darwaz is covered in heavy snow, opposition sources said. It takes about 12 days to reach Darwaz from the centre of Badakhshan by donkey or on foot, the sources said.—Reuters

DAWN

19 FEB 1999

Team to investigate disease in northeast Afghanistan

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Two epistemologists from the UN World Health Organisation headquarters in Geneva were to fly on Saturday, Dushunbe, Tajikistan, and then by UN helicopter to Darwaz, Afghanistan, scene of a reported outbreak of disease said to be affecting thousands of Afghans, states a UNO report here on Saturday.

The WHO received word by radio from local authorities on February 13 that an unexplained illness had struck 2,000 residents of four remote villages in Darwaz district of Badakhshan province, killing 150 people over the period of a month. Unconfirmed reports from neighbouring countries have placed the death toll far higher.

Symptoms were said to be fever, diarrhea, cough and vomiting, with the elderly, women and children the worst affected. Plague is known to be endemic in the area, but WHO experts could not confirm the diagnosis without visiting the site.

NATION

21 FEB 1999

180 prisoners die in Afghan jails

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR, Feb 3: As many as 180 Afghan prisoners have died in various jails of Afghanistan due to malnutrition and lack of medical help, according to reports here.

Afghan sources here said those who died in the prisons were political opponents of Taliban regime. None of them was a member of any armed faction of Afghanistan.

The Afghan opposition sources claimed that there were hundreds of such prisoners behind the bars in areas under Taliban control.

They said these prisoners were held not because of their crime but under suspicion of being supporters of opposition alliance, since no court trial was underway against them.

DAWN

14 FEB 1999

World community urged to help restore Afghan peace

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR - Chairman Council for Understanding and National Unity Afghanistan (CUNUA), Pir Muhammad Itimadi said that foreign imposed war had exacerbated the difficulties and problems of the Afghan nation, asking the world community, including the US, to compel the warring factions under the UN Security Council resolution 1214 to bring peace to Afghanistan.

Addressing a press conference Monday at Peshawar Press Club, he said, "As it appears that the world community had not consider the situation in the Afghanistan as bearable, therefore, he said, the international community should enhance its efforts to resolve the long standing issue". For the sake of liberty, he stated, Afghan freedom fighters defeated the Red Army of the former Soviet Union which was the common enemy of both the Afghans and the other democratic governments.

"The unparalleled sacrifices of the Afghan nationals led to the collapse of the former USSR and as a result its colonies in Europe and in Central Asia got independence," he maintained.

About the Americans he said they had helped us with military, financial and diplomatic assistance against the Russian forces during the years of our struggle for independence. At the same



time he regretted, "But our American friends has disappointed us in connection with the restoration of peace in the country."

Telling about the UN role in the settlement of the problem, he pointed out, that the special envoys of the organisation had failed miserably one after the other unable to muster the required support of the UNSC in general and that of the USA in particular. "but even then, the Afghans are hopeful that the UN would help them in restoring peace in their country," he informed.

"During the Lakhdar

Brahimi's tenure the UN sole initiative is based on the 6+2 group, which recommends the proposal for a broad based government, composed of multi-ethnic groups of war ravaged Afghanistan, he informed.

He added, "But the CUNUA is not very optimistic about this proposal to get successes as this phenomenon could create a lot of problems."

At the end the chairman CUNUA demanded a just political solution from the UNSC as soon as possible as under the present conditions the Afghans' inalienable right of self-determination has been snatched away.

Afghan body calls on rival groups to end bloodshed

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The Council for Understanding and National Unity of Afghanistan (CUNUA) Monday called on all the warring Afghan groups to agree to a permanent ceasefire to pave way for holding a Loya Jirga to end the ongoing bloodshed in the country.

Addressing a news conference at Peshawar Press Club, the newly elected chairman of CUNUA, Pir Mohammad Etemadi said that members of the council were faced with death threats and anger in pursuit of peace. "Our members are confronted with the anger and animosity of power seeking groups. In recent days, their lives have been endangered considerably due to assassinations in Peshawar," Etemadi said. He was accompanied by a number of the council members including Prof Rasul Amin, Hakim Aryubi, Shahzada Mehsud, Abdullah Ghamkhor and other tribal elders and intellectuals.

In this struggle, Etemadi said a number of famous leaders like Wali Khan Karokhel, General Abdul Hakim Katawazai, General Abdul Malik, former member of parliament Wazir Mohammad Khan Zadran, Jamiatullah Jalal have lost their lives at the hands of the enemies of peace. Nevertheless, CUNUA has continued its politi-

cal activities and has presented from time to time its peace proposals to the UN Secretary General personal envoy on Afghanistan, he said.

The UN Security Council resolution No 1214 could be construed as a serious warning of the world community to the warring factions in case the war continued unabated, he added. The prolongation of civil war in Afghanistan is due to the stark difference of world community, particularly that of the US, he said adding that foreign interference should be stopped to end this genocide.

He said that the Lakhdar Brahimi's scheduled meeting with representatives of the so-called six plus two nations in Tashkent would bear no fruit and the only viable solution to the problem was to initiate dialogue among different groups, tribal elders and influential Afghans. "Tashkent got freedom because of Afghans so it should not try to impose its will on the people of Afghanistan," said Etemadi. Afghans, he said had high hopes that the UN would help them achieve peace and a just political solution, but the world body has miserably failed to achieve this goal. The failure of the UN Secretary General's special envoy was mainly because he was unable to muster the support of the UN Security Council and that of America.

34 heroin labs destroyed by Taliban

KABUL (AFP)

Afghanistan's Taliban administration has destroyed 34 private heroin-producing refineries in eastern Nangarhar province, the official Radio Shariat said Sunday.

The Taliban mouthpiece said heroin processing laboratories had been operating in Aehin, Shinwar and Khogyani districts in Nangarhar on the Pakistani border.

In a recent operation to destroy the units, large quantities of chemicals used in making heroin from opium were confiscated and the culprits arrested, the radio said.

Besides high-quality heroin, Nangarhar has been a major source of hashish.

According to local farmers the Nangarhar authorities levy a tax on opium poppy crops.

The 1998 report of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme said more areas came under opium cultivation in Afghanistan but that yields dropped by 25 per cent due to unusual climatic condi-

tions. It estimated the opium production at 2,102 metric tonnes against 2,800 metric tons in 1997.

Intermittent rains led to diseases and significantly lower yields in many districts of Helmand, Kandahar and Oruzgan, three major opium producing provinces, which are under the control of the Taliban.

The report said that the damage to poppy cultivation occurred after the UN survey, which would have shown the total production of opium at 3,269 metric tonnes.

In 13 out of 31 provinces surveyed in 1998, Helmand with 30,673 hectares and Nangarhar with 17,822 hectares together accounted for 72 per cent of the area under opium cultivation, it added.

The Taliban has made it clear that a ban on poppy cultivation would depend on farmers getting assistance from the international community to help them switch to alternative crops, the report said.

FRONTIER POST

22 FEB 1999

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

23 FEB 1999

Broad-based govt only solution to Afghanistan

From Shahmim Shahid

PESHAWAR - The Council for Understanding and National Unity of Afghanistan has urged all international forums, particularly the 6+2 countries to focus their attention on formation of a broad-based interim government in Afghanistan, if they sincerely want an end to war and bloodshed.

"Conditions for convening of a loya jirga should become a reality and millions of Afghans who have been made hostages by the warlords will have the opportunity to reassert their national will by determining their destiny, free from coercion," the CUNUA President Pir Mohammad Etemadi remarked while addressing a Press conference here on Monday.

Flanked by a large number of founding leaders of the Council, including Prof. Rasool Amin, Mohammad Hakim Aryubi, Shehzada Mehsud and others, Pir Mohammad Etemadi went on in a detailed background of the Council which is against the foreign interferences in affairs of Afghanistan and favour a negotiated solution to the conflict.

Answering a question, Etemadi said that it is right that they were making such a demand from the last 20 years but that unless its acceptance no one could resolve the conflict.

The Council chairman recalled, "for the sake of liberty, Afghan freedom fighters defeated the Red Army of the former Soviet Union in Afghanistan, which was the common enemy of both the Afghans and those of the free democratic world.

The unparalleled sacrifices of Afghans led to the collapse of the former USSR and as a consequence its former colonies in Europe as well as those in the Central Asian Republics got their independence."

Referring to the role of United States, Pir Mohammad Etemadi said, "the Americans had helped the Afghans with generous military, financial and diplomatic assistance against the aggressive forces of the former Soviet Union during the years of our struggle for independence.

The majority of the Afghans carried on the struggle with weapons captured from the aggressive Red Army." He

however said, "our American friends poured in military aid to win the war but for restoration of peace they disappointed us and left the Afghans in lurch.

The Council chairman said that Afghans, who were badly affected by the imposed wars had high hopes and expectation from the United Nations. However, the UN has always focused its efforts on the warring factions who are reluctant to give away just rights of self-determination to them.

The CUNUA is not very optimistic about this proposal to have a practical chance of success. The reason is, who will form this government.

While in the second stage, they are demanding induction of the genuine Afghan elite in the negotiation process.

He was of the view that through such process, the 6+2 and other international forums could get its objectives of transfer of power to the broad-based government. He added that only through convening a meeting of the loya jirga, the broad-based government to be acceptable to the Afghans could be formed.

Brahimi urged to consult intellectuals on Afghan issue

Jehadic and militia forces main hurdle in peace process; immediate loya jirga meeting vital

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR - Former Jehadic Commander and known tribal figure from Paktia Province of Afghanistan, Haji Badshah Khan Zadran has urged the UN Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Mr Lakhdar Brahimi to consult the tribal chieftains, intellectuals and moderate Ulema and commanders for a negotiated solution to the long awaited conflict.

Talking to *The Nation* on telephone from Miranshah of North Waziristan Agency on Friday, Haji Badshah Khan Zadran welcomed Mr Brahimi, renewed efforts for a negotiated solution to the conflict. Elaborating his point of view, the tribal elder from Afghanistan said that it was crystal clear that jehadic and militia forces, particularly those who have engaged in the in-fighting since 1992 didn't allow peace to prevail.

Haji Badshah Khan Zadran further said that since a long the UN, through its

special envoys concentrated its efforts on Jehadic and militia leaders who had been considering hostilities and confrontation as a source for their survival. It could be considered the main reason of UN's failure in Afghanistan, therefore, Mr Lakhdar Brahimi needs to revise his strategy and focus his efforts on those peace loving and patriotic Afghans who sincerely want return of a peaceful atmosphere.

The Afghan tribal elder reminded that like-minded Afghans, since a long had been struggling for a negotiated solution to the conflict and they had time and again reaffirmed their support to the UN peace missions. However, in return, they got nothing except disappointment from the UN volunteers. In fact, the UN envoys have always encouraged those who favour bloodshed and destruction in Afghanistan.

In this connection, Haji Badshah Khan Zadran asked the UN envoy to keep in mind proposals and recommendations

of Quetta, Pakistan and Germany Conferences before leaving the region. He was of the firm belief that with honouring such recommendations, the UN envoy could easily resolve the long-awaited Afghan conflict which had not only affected the regional peace and economy but also had become a serious problem. He said that it was a high time for the UN envoy to take steps for a negotiated solution to the Afghan conflict.

Haji Badshah Khan Zadran said that unless giving just right of self-determination to the war-affected Afghans, no one could ensure permanent solution to the issue with formation of coalition government comprising the stalwarts of jehadic and militia forces.

For this purposes, he backed the proposal of an emergency loya jirga meeting enabling the Afghans from each and every corner of the country of sending their representatives for deciding future of their war affected country.

23 FEB 1999
FRONTIER POST

NATION 27 FEB 1999

DAWN 10 FEB 1999

Taliban not to force Osama to leave Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - The Taliban said Tuesday Osama bin Laden was free to leave Afghanistan, but he will not be forced out, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

The decision was taken by the Taliban leadership after considering the latest US request for Osama to be expelled, Taliban spokesman Abdul Mutmaen told the Pakistan-based private information service. 'Osama bin Laden can leave Afghanistan if he wishes too and we will have no objection. But the Taliban will never force him to leave the country,' Mutmaen said.

He said the Taliban was still waiting for evidence to support allegations that Osama was a terrorist mastermind.

'It is an injustice to exert pressure on the Afghan government without furnishing any proof,' Mutmaen said.

US Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth, in a meeting here last Wednesday with Taliban deputy Foreign Minister Maulvi Abdul Jalil demanded Osama be expelled from his Afghan sanctuary.

Shamim Shahid from Peshawar adds: Taliban Tuesday rejected the United States demand for extradition of Osama bin Laden to America or Saudi Arabia and reaffirmed that Osama was their guest and assured that he would not indulge in subversive acts, it was officially announced at Kabul.

The United States Assistant Secretary of States Karl Inderfurth had demanded extradition of Osama to America or Saudi Arabia during his talks with Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Maulvi Abdul Jalil held in Islamabad on February 3 on the initiatives of Pakistan.

However, the US Assistant Secretary of States had failed to convince the Afghan foreign minister that Osama bin Laden was involved in terrorist acts or he was patronising a particular terrorist group all over the world. Despite failure in proving Osama a terrorist, Inderfurth insisted on extradition of Osama and made certain proposals in this regard.

NATION

10 FEB 1999

Taliban not to expel Osama: spokesman

ISLAMABAD, Feb 9: The Taliban said on Tuesday that Osama bin Laden was free to leave Afghanistan, but he will not be forced out, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

The decision was taken by the Taliban leadership after considering the latest US request for Osama to be expelled, Taliban spokesman Abdul Mutmaen told the private information service.

"Osama bin Laden can leave Afghanistan if he wishes to, and we will have no objection. But the Taliban will never force him to leave the country," Mutmaen said.

He said the Taliban were still waiting for evidence to support allegations that Osama was a terrorist mastermind.

"It is an injustice to exert pressure on the Afghan government without furnishing any proof," Mutmaen said.—AFP

Taliban deny cease-fire agreement with opposition

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - Afghanistan's ruling Taliban on Friday denied reports that they have struck a cease-fire accord with their rivals in Turkmenistan.

"There was no cease-fire agreement in the Ashgabad talks, however, the two sides agreed on the exchange of prisoners," a Taliban diplomat told the agency.

Senior Taliban officials and representatives of the opposition commander Ahmed Shah Masood held talks in Turkmenistan on Wednesday under the aegis of the United Nations.

Afghan Foreign Secretary Maulvi Abdur Rahman Zahid led Taliban team in the talks while Abdul Karim Hashmi and Amrullah Saleh represented commander Madood.

It was the first high level face-to-face meeting between Taliban and opposition after the collapse of their talks in Islamabad in May last year. The five-day talks in Islamabad had failed to produce any result.

NATION

13 FEB 1999

Taliban tighten control on Osama bin Laden

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - The Taliban Wednesday bowed to British and US pressure and isolated Osama Bin Laden, banning him from accepting visitors or having outside contact, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

'Osama bin Laden has been disallowed to meet any visitors or other people,' the private information service said, quoting a decree issued by the office of Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar.

All communication equipment including his telephone and radio had been withdrawn, AIP reported.

'Osama Bin Laden no longer has any facilities with him to communicate with anyone,' it said quoting a Taliban statement. Osama, now living in Afghani-

stan, has been accused by the United States of masterminding the bombings last August of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that left more than 200 people dead. The Taliban said a special team had been set up to keep watch on Osama to ensure the restrictions were met.

An unidentified Taliban spokesman was quoted as saying the militia leadership would review Osama's 'guest status' off if the bans were violated in any way. 'The Taliban described London's request for Kabul to control Osama's activities as 'more reasonable' than Washington's demand that he be expelled.

A Taliban spokesman, Abdul Mutmaen, said Tuesday that Osama was free to leave Afghanistan, but he would not be forced out.

NATION

11 FEB 1999

Dispatches

FEB 1999

of a long-standing policy of keeping them out of what is known as the tribal territories—so journalists had to disguise themselves just to get close. But even if they managed to get that far, there was always the chance that they would be shot on sight. In fact, an Afghan journalist named Abdullah was nearly killed after he was found, carrying a satellite phone, in the vicinity of the camps. He was saved only by the last-minute intervention of a military commander who happened to know him.

Because he was dark-skinned and spoke Pashto, Carlos was one of the few journalists in the world who even had a chance of getting into the camps. Born in 1958 to a Greek shipping heir and his beautiful Mexican wife, Carlos grew up in a world of extraordinary English privilege. On the eve of Carlos's third birthday, his mother, Gioconda, had walked out on her husband, Bluey, and ever since the two sides of the family have remained bitterly separated. Bluey, a hopeless Anglophile, insisted that Carlos go to Eton, but that ended in disaster. "I tried like hell to make him toe the line," Bluey recalls, "but I was not very successful. We had a family home in Greece, by the sea, and one summer he just didn't show up."

Carlos had scraped together a few hundred pounds and, at the age of 16, lit out for the East. He hitchhiked across Turkey and Iran and finally wound up in the Swat Valley in northern Pakistan, surviving on a series of odd jobs while learning Pashto. He also studied the Koran and converted to Islam, giving himself the name Karimullah—"blessed by God."

To this day, no one in Carlos's family knows why he left. At various times it has been suggested that he was rebelling against his family, that he was rebelling against English society, that he was trying to prove himself, that he was trying to impress his father, or that he was just very unhappy. In England, there is a long tradition of the sons of aristocracy risking their lives in central Asia, and Carlos was well aware of it. The impossibly daring spies during England's "Great Game" rivalry with Russia were all from upper-class families—as were Lord Byron, Lawrence of Arabia, and Sir Richard Burton. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, it turns out, was one of Carlos's favorite books.

Carlos stayed away so long—two years—that by the time he returned to England in 1976 his family had given him up for dead. He spent six months recuperating from various diseases, and then, as would occur many times in his life, the pendulum started swinging back. Carlos waded into London's drug and punk

scenes and emerged two years later with a heroin addiction and—somehow—a diploma from Millfield, a prestigious prep school in southwestern England. He managed to get into Harvard, studied political science, graduated cum laude, eventually moved to New York, and started working at the Wall Street firm Dominick & Dominick.

By his own admission, Carlos plunged into a life of breathtaking decadence and drug abuse. He lived on Manhattan's East Side, on Beekman Place, and hung out at clubs such as Xenon. "It was the height of the Reagan years, you could do no wrong," he later told a journalist. "Five-figure American Express bills and summer houses by the sea in the Hamptons." He met and socialized with the Kennedys, Oliver Stone, Barbra Streisand. He was good-looking, smart, and horribly charming.

It took a couple of years, but Carlos finally tired of the drugs and the money and the people who came with them. His grandfather Basil had started from scratch and built a shipping company, London & Overseas Freighters, worth \$120 million, and Carlos wanted to do something equally grand. He wanted to succeed on his own terms—in a world where his family's name and money meant nothing. The Russians had invaded Afghanistan in 1979, and the mujahideen had declared a holy war against them. Carlos decided that, as a practicing Muslim, it was his right—his duty—to help fight. He would go over there and talk his way into the ranks of the mujahideen. He would fight in defense of Islam.

The first thing he did was contact an English relief organization called *Afghan-aid*, and from it he got the name of an English freelance cameraman named Peter Jouvenal, who had been covering the war—sometimes for the BBC—almost since the invasion. Jouvenal met with Carlos in London and gave him some contacts in one of the less extreme factions in the war, the Hizbi-Islami Party of Yunis Khalis. At the time, Peshawar was a vast clearinghouse for the weapons and money that were pouring into Afghanistan from the rest of the world, and every mujahideen group had representatives there to vie for the handouts. Carlos tracked down his contacts in Peshawar and persuaded them to let him accompany their fighters into the field.

They left in midwinter, crossing the Spin Ghar Mountains on foot and making their way to a large rebel camp at Black Mountain. According to a mujahideen comrade, Carlos spent a month working as a cook at the base, and he once helped load a BM-12 rocket launch-

er during an attack on a Russian convoy. He prayed longer and harder than anyone else, insisted on doing streamside ablutions even in winter, and once walked three days on bloody, frozen feet. It was classic Carlos: a bit of the penitent, a bit of the zealot. He had been raised in a stifling upper-class society that would never fully accept him. He had all the instincts that could free him—a great curiosity about the world, a broad streak of wildness—but in doses that created as many problems as they solved. He saw all too clearly what was wrong with the world, and—his fatal flaw—staked his life on fixing it.

"The next time I saw Carlos was in '87," says Peter Jouvenal, who is still based in Kabul. "He came into my hotel room and he'd shaved his head completely; I thought he was an Afghan. He had this thing of trying to blend in and identify with the locals, to be one of them. He used to sleep on the floor of this office, and not on a cushion. Just the complete opposite of the life he was used to."

Carlos spent the late 80s in and out of Afghanistan, fighting in battles around the provinces of Paktiā and Nangarhār. He had gone completely native, and he rarely associated with the fraternity of journalists and relief workers in Peshawar. When he came out of Afghanistan, he wouldn't relax with everyone else at the Pearl Continental Hotel in Peshawar; he'd stay with Afghan families and then head back into the war. There are conflicting reports about his involvement—by some accounts, he was a regular foot soldier; by others, a platoon commander who personally shot down two Russian helicopters. Carlos didn't offer details about his experiences, and journalists didn't ask. In all likelihood, he was just another guy with a machine gun, but apparently he was brave—apparently brave. He had a reputation for always being on the front line, always pushing things. It seemed to many that he was fighting himself as much as he was fighting the Russians. "I've got footage from Carlos that shouldn't have been taken by any sane cameraman," says Mark Stucke, a documentary-film producer who began working in Afghanistan when he was 18. "It wasn't even brave. It was insane."

The Soviets pulled out in February 1989—after killing as many as 1.5 million Afghans—and the country degenerated into a lawless free-for-all between various mujahideen commanders. Peter Jouvenal would run into Carlos from time to time, usually in Peshawar, and suggested that Carlos become a cameraman. Carlos liked the idea, and organized a trip to film the fall of Jalālābād in eastern Afghanistan. Conditions were rough, but

Militia won't expel Osama

KABUL, Feb 10: The Taliban on Wednesday ruled out extradition of Osama bin Laden, saying such a request was illogical.

Washington has offered a reward of five million dollars for information leading to his arrest and conviction.

"This is not rational to say that Osama should be expelled, extradited or handed over. Any move on these lines against Osama will cause a lot of resentment and a chaotic situation among the Afghans and the whole Muslim world," Taliban spokesman Mullah Abdul Haye Mutmaen said.

Mutmaen was speaking by telephone from Kandahar after the Taliban leadership there considered a letter sent by the United States.

The letter was handed over to Taliban envoy Mullah Abdul Jalil during a meeting with Deputy US Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth in Pakistan last week.

Neither side has disclosed the contents of the letter, but the Afghan Islamic Press said on Saturday that Washington had proposed the Taliban either hand over Bin Laden to the United States or to Saudi Arabia, or expel him.

"No Muslim or Afghan would accept the handing over of Osama. We guarantee we will control his political and military activities," Mutmaen said.

"Afghans worry that the US just makes excuses about Osama's presence and in reality wants to block the establishment of a strong Islamic government under the Taliban in Afghanistan," he said.

On Monday, Britain also told the Taliban to "get control of" Bin Laden.

The message was delivered by British Foreign Office Minister of state Derek Fatchett in the first ministerial-level talks between the militia and London.—Reuters

DAWN

11 FEB 1999

Bin Laden free to go to any country: Omar

KABUL — (AFP) The highest authority in Afghanistan's Taliban regime, Mullah Mohammed Omar said late Sunday that the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden remains a mystery.

Speaking for the first time on the issue, the Taliban supreme leader stressed Osama had not been forced out of Afghanistan. "We never forced Osama to leave the country. He was free to go to any country he wanted," Omar told the official radio Shariat.

He said the Taliban had met all obligations to Osama, adding there were three reasons why he had not been handed over to the international authorities.

"First if we handed over Osama to anybody this would be a black spot on Afghan history and would have gone against fraternity and the tradition of Afghanistan because he was our guest."

Secondly, he said no other Muslim country would provide him with sanctuary, "which is extremely regrettable."

And thirdly the United States had denied Osama his right to express his views, he said.

Asked about the potential for another US strike on Afghanistan, Omar said, "it is up to America if they want to launch rocket attacks on Afghanistan, and we can say that Afghans will not yield to anyone might nor would Afghans accept their demand by force."

Omar said the Taliban had not accepted any financial assistance from Osama "because he is suffering economic hardships himself."

According to another report the Taliban militia have started searching Osama bin Laden.

Sources said the authorities have yet to find any clue to the Saudi dissident.

NATION

15 FEB 1999

Mulla Omar vows to defeat Masood

KABUL (AFP) - Taliban supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar has vowed 'with the help of God' to drive remaining opposition forces from Afghanistan soon, the Islamic militia's Radio Shariat reported Monday.

Omar said God would help his religious students defeat the forces of former Afghan defence minister Ahmad Shah Masood — the last obstacle to total Taliban control of the country.

But an aide to Masood said the Taliban still did not realise there could be no military solution in the war-torn country.

"We are completely convinced that Masood's force would be cleaned out of the remaining areas of the country at the soonest with the help of God the Almighty," Omar was quoted as saying at a rare press conference in his stronghold in the southern city of Kandahar Sunday. Masood, who won fame for his guerrilla warfare against Soviet troops during their 1979-1989 occupation, is entrenched in the Hindu Kush mountain ranges in the northeast. The Taliban control about 80 per cent of Afghanistan including the capital Kabul.

Mohammad Eshaq, political adviser to Masood, said the Taliban chief had yet to understand that the Afghan issue had no military solution.

"It could take a few years before they learn that the only way to solve the problem is to let the people decide," Eshaq told AFP.

"First we fought the Soviets from the north, now we are fighting the Taliban from the south trying to capture Afghanistan by force," he said.

Afghans marked the 10th anniversary of the Soviet withdrawal Monday.

Eshaq also accused the Taliban of being a client of Pakistan, a claim denied by the militia and Islamabad.

Taliban fighters took northern and central parts of the country from an ethnic Uzbek general Abdul Rashid Dostam and from the Hezb-i-Wahdat party in a lightning push last year. Omar vowed that the same would happen to Masood also. The Taliban militia emerged in 1994 and two years later seized power from the chaotic government of then-President Burhanuddin Rabbani in which Masood was defence minister. The Taliban and Masood's forces have exchanged 40 prisoners north of Kabul in the past two days, according to a statement issued Monday by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

NATION

16 FEB 1999

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

18 FEB 1999

Taliban supreme leader vows to defeat Masud

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The Taliban and Masud's forces have exchanged 40 prisoners north of Kabul in the past two days, according to a statement issued Monday by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

It said those released were for the first time returned to their respective forces by ICRC planes to avoid "an active frontline and unmarked minefields." Some of the detainees were too sick for continued detention, the statement said.

Both sides are still holding thousands of prisoners but it is hard to give a precise number as irregular swaps take place through various channels.—AFP

Taliban leader plans to finish off Masood

KABUL, Feb 15: Taliban supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar has vowed "with the help of God" to drive remaining opposition forces from Afghanistan soon, Radio Shariat reported on Monday.

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DAWN

16 FEB 1999

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL 18 FEB 1999

Taliban suspect Osama has fled Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD: A spokesman for the Taliban militia was quoted as telling a private Afghan news service on Wednesday that Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden had probably left Afghanistan.

"We have no specific information about Osama bin Laden but we strongly suspect now that he has left Afghanistan," the spokesman told the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP).

Taliban officials last week said the multi-millionaire and alleged terrorist, who had been living in Afghanistan as guest of the hardline militia, was missing. The Pakistan-based AIP said the spokesman, who requested not to be identified by name, gave no details when asked which country bin Laden might have gone to.

Independent confirmation of the AIP report was not immediately available.

The report came after an anti-Taliban alliance spokesman claimed Tuesday that Bin Laden had been sighted inside Afghanistan by troops loyal to the Afghan opposition.

Bin Laden is wanted in Washington for allegedly masterminding the twin bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August in which some 250 people including 12 American nationals were killed.

Shortly after the attacks the US launched cruise missile strikes on Bin Laden's suspected terrorist camps in eastern Afghanistan. Washington has also issued a five million dollar reward for his capture.—AFP

'Taliban ask Osama to return to Kandahar'

DUBAI: The Taliban militia has asked alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden to return to its Kandahar stronghold in southwest Afghanistan, the Arabic newspaper Al-Hayat reported Wednesday.

The London-based daily said a Taliban delegation travelled to Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan to meet the Saudi dissident, who left Kandahar around two weeks ago.

The Taliban believe that "bin Laden will not leave Afghanistan and have come to the conclusion his presence in Kandahar would allow them to limit his movements," it said.

But the multi-millionaire Islamist "feels freer in Jalalabad", where he fought alongside the Mujahideen during the Soviet occupation of the 1980s, it said.

On February 17, a Taliban official said in Washington after meeting a se-

nior US diplomat that bin Laden was no longer in territory controlled by the Taliban.

"He is not in the area in control of the Taliban," Abdul Hakim Mujahid, the Taliban's New York-based representative said. "He decided himself to leave, we do not know where he is."

Al-Hayat said the same day that bin Laden had moved to a military base near Jalalabad that served the Hezb-i-Islami faction of Yunus Khalis during the Soviet occupation. It is now also under Taliban control.

Bin Laden is wanted in the United States for alleged involvement in the August 7, 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in which some 250 people were killed, including 12 Americans.

Washington has offered a five-million-dollar reward for his capture.—AFP

Taliban team meets Osama in Jalalabad

From Dr JASSIM TAQUI

ISLAMABAD - Afghan Taliban officials meet Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden a few days ago in the eastern town of Jalalabad, reported London-based Arabic daily al-Hayat. It said "Informed Afghani sources told Al-Hayat that a delegation from Taliban a few days ago visited Osama bin Laden in Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan in an effort to mend tense relations between the two sides."

Al-Hayat said the delegation which met bin Laden included the Taliban's deputy foreign minister Mullah Abdul Jalil and the head of the administrative affairs at the foreign minister.

It said that the two offered bin Laden to return to Kandahar—the Taliban's headquarters in southern Afghanistan, where he had been the "guest" of Taliban for the past three years.

"The sources attributed the new move by Taliban to the movement being convinced that bin Laden will not leave Afghanistan and it was not in a position to ask him to leave, so his presence at its stronghold in Kandahar will limit his movement," the paper disclosed.

In a related story al-Hayat quoting US intelligence said that the American agencies had blocked at least seven attacks on US facilities overseas by bin Laden since last summer's bombing of two US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. They even now expect surprise attacks on US and British interests, especially in Europe and the Middle East.

FRONTIER POST

25 FEB 1999

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

25 FEB 1999

Taliban say Osama no longer in their territory

WASHINGTON (AFP) - An official from Afghanistan's Taliban said here Wednesday that accused Saudi terrorist Osama bin Laden is no longer in territory controlled by the fundamentalist militia.

'He is not in the area in control of the Taliban,' Abdul Hakkim Mujahid, the Taliban's New York-based representative told reporters at the State Department after meeting a senior US diplomat for talks on Osama's whereabouts.

'He decided himself to leave, we do not know where he is,' Mujahid said, adding that Osama had left Taliban control on Friday or Saturday.

His comments followed a meeting with Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Karl Inderfurth who was seeking learn Osama's whereabouts.

Inderfurth was 'seeking further information on the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden' and was to 'reiterate the strong message that ... Osama must be brought to justice for his crimes,' State Department spokesman James Foley said.

He noted that the subjects discussed would have followed those in Inderfurth's first meeting with a senior Taliban official earlier this month in Pakistan.

'The presence of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan has been detrimental to the interests of the Afghan people

and poses a major obstacle to the Taliban in its desire to gain greater international acceptance,' Foley said.

'The presence of Osama anywhere but in the hands of justice is unacceptable to the United States.'

Foley added the meeting was requested following conflicting week-end reports that Osama, wanted by Washington for his alleged role in plotting the deadly US embassy bombings in East Africa last year, had left Afghanistan.

Taliban officials said Osama, who had been living in Afghanistan as guest of the hardline militia, was missing.

But that report was followed by another from an anti-Taliban alliance spokesman who claimed Tuesday that he had been sighted inside Afghanistan by troops loyal to the Afghan opposition.

Foley said the United States, which has offered a five million dollar reward for Osama's capture and conviction, had no information on where he was. Details of the meeting were not immediately available but Foley said Inderfurth was also to have raised issues such as the rights of women and girls in areas under the Muslim's control.

In addition, drug cultivation and US offers of humanitarian relief following this week's devastating earthquakes in eastern Wardak province were to be discussed.

Taliban suspect Osama has fled Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - A spokesman for the Taliban militia was quoted as telling a private Afghan news service on Wednesday that Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden had probably left Afghanistan.

'We have no specific information about Osama bin Laden but we strongly suspect now that he has left Afghanistan,' the spokesman told the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP).

Taliban officials last week said the multi-millionaire and alleged terrorist, who had been living in Afghanistan as guest of the hardline militia, was missing.

The Pakistan-based AIP said the spokesman, who requested not to be identified by name, gave no details when asked which country bin Laden might have gone to.

Independent confirmation of the AIP report was not immediately available.

The report came after an anti-Taliban alliance spokesman claimed Tuesday that bin Laden had been sighted inside Afghanistan by troops loyal to the Afghan opposition.

FRONTIER POST

18 FEB 1999

NATION 19 FEB 1999

DAWN

01 FEB 1999

Chinese team in Kabul for talks with Taliban

KABUL, Jan 31: A delegation from China's foreign ministry arrived in Kabul on Sunday for talks with the Taliban on the conflict there, official sources said.

The five-member team is thought to be the highest-level delegation China has sent to the Afghan capital since the Taleban swept to power more than two years ago.

China is a member of the so-called Six Plus Two UN contact group, which is seeking a solution to Afghanistan's ethnic, political and factional conflict. The group includes other neighbour states, the United States and Russia.

Its brief is to bring about a broad-based government in Afghanistan.

Last week the Taliban called on the international community to cooperate with it in resolving tensions over Osama bin Laden as well as over its policies on drug production and women.

The delegation is expected to visit its embassy compound, which has been closed for nearly eight years because of war.—Reuters

AFP adds from Tehran: Iran gave a guarded welcome on Sunday to a call by the Taliban for an improvement in their troubled relations, repeating earlier preconditions for a dialogue.

Foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said "there are no obstacles" to a dialogue if the Taliban meet Iran's condition of arresting and punishing those responsible for the murder of Iranian diplomats and a journalist in Afghanistan last August.

"We have insisted our legitimate demand that the identification, arrest and punishment of those responsible for the murder of Iranian diplomats and a journalist are the precondition to any further developments" in relations, state radio quoted him as saying.

He added the Taliban should inform Iranian authorities of their intentions in this regard and expect an official response in return.

The Taliban foreign ministry on Wednesday called for improved relations with Iran.

Taliban accuse US, Israel of backing Masood

KABUL, Feb 2: A Taliban mouthpiece on Tuesday accused Israel and the United States of backing its key foe, opposition fighter Ahmed Shah Masood.

The Taliban-controlled weekly Shariat said Masood "is distributing false reports about his military gains to keep happy his foreign masters such as the United States, Israel, India and Russia".

"Each of these aforementioned countries undertakes exorbitant payments in arming the (opposition) militias, hoping and counting time for the return to the stage of their slaves," it added.

It was thought to be the first time the militia had added Israel and the United States to the list of states, including Russia and India, it frequently charges with arming Masood.—Reuters

DAWN

03 FEB 1999

Afghan-Japan accord

KABUL, Feb 4: Afghan authorities have signed a protocol with Japan for the provision of emergency aid after natural disasters, Health Minister Mulla Abbas Akhund said on Thursday. Akhund said the protocol was signed after a conference on the prevention of natural disasters which covered earthquakes, floods and epidemics in Afghanistan. As a result, foreign aid group Asia Medical Doctors Association will establish an office in Kabul to help coordinate a response to future disasters.—AFP

DAWN

05 FEB 1999

Taliban ready to discuss US proposals over Bin Laden

ISLAMABAD, Feb 6: The Taliban leadership was prepared to discuss US demands to hand over Osama bin Laden, a Taliban spokesman said on Saturday. Washington wanted the expulsion of Osama from Afghanistan or his handover to the US or S Arabia, the spokesman Abdul Murteen told the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP). Speaking from Kandahar, he said US Assistant Secretary of State Mr Karl Inderfurth, made the proposal in talks with Taliban deputy foreign minister Maulvi Jallil Akhund in Islamabad on Wednesday.—AFP

DAWN

07 FEB 1999

US strike to be a mistake, say Taliban

KABUL, Feb 11: The Taliban said on Thursday that any fresh US strike against Osama bin Laden would demonstrate US "dictatorship" and be an "unforgettable mistake".

Chief spokesman Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil said reports of Bin Laden planning attacks on Western targets were "hollow rumours" which Washington was fabricating to justify another strike.

He was reacting to US dismissal of restrictions which the Taliban clamped on Bin Laden on Wednesday. These include cutting off his telephone and wireless links, restricting his movements and placing him under monitoring.

U.S. officials rejected the curbs on the man they suspect of masterminding bloody bomb attacks on American embassies in East Africa last August, and said Washington would carry out a military strike if needed to prevent further atrocities.

"The attack depends on the US. It attacked Afghanistan in the past," Muttawakil said, recalling Washington fired cruise missiles at suspected Bin Laden training camps in August after more than 200 people were killed in the attacks on embassies.

"If it does it now, then it shows its flagrant determination to rule the world through dictatorship, and if it does attack, it will be an unforgettable mistake which the world would remember," Muttawakil said.

The Taliban curbs on Bin Laden, who is thought to live in the movement's southern spiritual capital of Kandahar, followed talks between the Taliban and US officials in the past two weeks.

"Any future attack will show that the US wants to follow the logic of a military solution. Afghans believe in freedom, independence and the U.S. does not want us to remain as such," Muttawakil said in the telephone interview from Kandahar. —Reuters

DAWN

12 FEB 1999

Taliban confirm Osama's exit of Afghanistan

From DR. JASSIM TAQUI

ISLAMABAD - For the first time, the Taliban confirm officially that Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden has left Afghanistan and that he is not simply 'missing'.

According to Taliban sources, the representative of Taliban, Abdul Hakeem Mujahid told Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, Karl Inderfurth, Thursday, when he met him in Washington, that Osama bin Laden left Afghanistan for good on either last Friday or Saturday. Inderfurth was also told that all stories regarding the sighting of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan were fake and concocted.

According to Mujahid the reason behind the exit of Osama bin Laden is that the Taliban placed him under increasing restrictions that made him prefer leaving Afghanistan than to stay in it as a prisoner.

Taliban maintained that they were left with no option other than restricting the movements of bin Laden, since the United States was threatening to attack and devastate Afghanistan.

In a related development, State Department spokesman James Foley said that it was the United States which asked for a meeting with the representative of the Taliban in a bid to clarify the confusion over bin Laden's movements and activities.

James Foley has hinted that the United States might attack Afghanistan once again when he said: "The United States reserves the right to act either in anticipation of, or to prevent, terrorist attacks or in retaliation against terrorist attacks."

DAWN

12 FEB 1999

Kabul warns against foreign interference

ISLAMABAD (PPI)—Any meeting on Afghanistan without the participation of the Islamic Emirates participation would not produce any result.

"This is our official stand", stressed Senior Spokesman of Taliban Maulvi Wakil Ahmed Mutawakkal, he said this when asked to comment on the meeting of the Six plus Two group to be held in March or April this year in Tashkent capital of Uzbekistan.

The group is a forum arranged under the United Nations in which neighbouring countries of Afghanistan and Russia and the United States are included. It is a political step by the UN aimed at ending 20 years long Afghan war. The group had its first meeting in New York last September.

Wakil Mutawakkal told VOA on Saturday he believed that no more opportunity would be given to foreigners to interfere in Afghanistan. He prayed for an end to foreign interference so that the Afghans could resume routine life in their country.

NATION

07 FEB 1999

DAWN 19 FEB 1999

Osama not in Taliban area, US told

WASHINGTON, Feb 18: A representative of Taliban told the United States on Wednesday that Osama bin Laden has left Taliban-controlled territory.

Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, designated by the group as its representative to the United Nations, said he had told Karl Inderfurth, assistant US secretary of state for South Asian affairs, that Osama had left last Friday or Saturday.

"He is not in the area in control of the Taliban," Mujahid told reporters after their lengthy meeting at the State department, adding: "He decided himself to leave."

A State Department spokesman confirmed that Mujahid had said Osama had left.

He added: "We cannot confirm this independently at this time but

we will continue our efforts to locate him and see that he is brought to justice.

He said Mujahid had not told Inderfurth where Osama was now, or the circumstances of his departure, but had said the Taliban had placed increasing restrictions on the Saudi-born exile in recent weeks.

"We understand that more will be made clear in time regarding the circumstances of his departure," he said. "We have been told that the Taliban will not support international terrorism in any form. We hope this will prove true," he said.

But a key Afghan opposition group said Osama was still in Afghanistan and that reports to the contrary were a ploy to ease US pressure on the Taliban.—Reuters

Taliban stop visas to journalists

ISLAMABAD, Feb 26: The Taliban have restricted the entry of Pakistani and other foreign journalists into Afghanistan, a Taliban diplomat said on Friday.

"We have stopped issuing visas to Pakistani and journalists from other countries after the publication of some photographs in various papers," the diplomat said.—NNI

DAWN 27 FEB 1999

NATION 15 FEB 1999

Soviet pullout prepared Kabul for further conflict

KABUL (AFP) - Some of the causes of the ongoing civil war in Afghanistan can be traced to February 15, 1989, the day the Soviet Union pulled out of Afghanistan but left its proxies behind, analysts say.

The Red Army had marched into Afghanistan in December 1978 to prop up Kabul's crumbling communist regime which it had openly supported after a palace coup removed the monarch in 1973.

Officially, some 15,000 Soviet soldiers died fighting in Afghanistan but unofficial estimates put the figure much higher. Billions of dollars were spent to support Moscow's investment which historians say dated back to the early 1950s.

The Soviet legacy in Afghanistan was an estimated 1.5 million resistance fighters killed and five million refugees in Pakistan and Iran.

Western analysts expected the communist regime of president Najibullah to fall within days of the Soviet pullout, but it clung to power for three more years thanks to a constant flow of arms from Moscow, and infighting among opposition groups.

The time was ripe for a political solution but the Soviets kept interfering and the US and Pakistan kept arming different factions in the Mujahideen, one local analyst said. "Each country did this to suit itself and none of this was in Afghanistan's best interests, contributing heavily to the mess we have today," he added.

Between 1989 and 1992 Soviet support for the Kabul regime was estimated at 320 million dollars a month until the Soviet Union was dismantled, ending the Cold War.

In early 1992 mutineers within Najibullah's ranks entered an alliance with the anti-Soviet resistance fighter,

Commander Ahmad Shah Masood. As the alliance closed in on Kabul, Najibullah was forced to stand down under a United Nations-sponsored power sharing agreement. Masood seized power.

Najibullah, who ran Kabul's loathed secret service during the Soviet occupation, took refuge in a UN compound. He was replaced by Sibghatullah Mujaddidi who served an agreed two-month term before handing over the

power to Burhanuddin Rabbani, who under the brokered terms was allowed six months in power.

"No role was found for the royal family which historically had been seen as the one unifying force in a country dominated by six ethnic groups, two official languages and tribal warlords," a western observer said.

Peace eluded as fighting continued among the Mujahideen groups. Rabbani refused to stand down as

Taliban resolve deadly dispute

Minister Mulla Amir Muttaqi, as saying.

Muttaqi said the dispute was solved through a Jirga after the Taliban administration showed a "proper reaction."

A tribal chieftain was quoted by the radio as saying that the Gurbuz tribesmen would continue to support the Taliban.

Egg-knocking, known here as "Tokhm-Jangi", is a traditional game practised all over Afghanistan on religious and other festivals. Basketsful of boiled and dyed eggs are taken to local parks and resorts.

Two players choose one or several eggs after gently knocking them against their teeth to test the hardness. Then they knock the point of one egg against the other until one cracks.

The owner of the cracked egg loses the game and the eggs. —AFP

president and staged his own election for a council of ulema (clerics). But the Mujahideen factions claimed the election was rigged.

The one-time anti-Soviet allies went to war. Two-thirds of Kabul was destroyed and 60,000 people killed in four years of chaos with Masood fighting Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, chief of the Hezb-i-Islami faction.

Pleas for a compromise failed until a new force, the Taliban religious students, ousted the warring factions from Kabul in September 1996.

The Taliban sprouted early 1994 in the southern province of Kandahar which had become a notorious model of the Mujahideen anarchy, warlordism and crime.

They routed the Mujahideen from Kabul. Najibullah and his brother were taken from the UN compound and hanged in public and the fighting resumed in the countryside laid waste in the years of Soviet invasion.

Thousands lost their lives as the Taliban mounted a relentless campaign to take northern Afghanistan, the stronghold of their enemies.

The Taliban still control around 80 percent of the country. They are now battling Masood's forces entrenched in the Hindu Kush mountain ranges and remain convinced total control is within their grasp.

"Every faction which has grabbed power has persisted with fighting what was left of their opposition in search of a final military solution. This has only resulted in further bloodshed," an Afghan analyst said.

"I think peace will never come. I am tired of hoping for peace and following the constant stream of news on political and military developments," he said.

DAWN 02 FEB 1999

Afghans count costs 10 years after Soviet withdrawal

By Luke Hunt

KABUL: The people of Afghanistan are still counting the cost of their nation's occupation by the Soviet Union, which ended a decade ago.

Some 1.5 million lives were lost, while the communist domination spelt ruin for a once bustling local economy.

The Afghans mounted a determined battle against the occupying forces, leading to the Soviet pull-out 10 years ago on February 15.

"There was dancing and partying in the streets, the people were happy, they hated the Russians," Akhtar Mohammad Abdalli, a retired teacher from a former international high school, told AFP.

"People believed their country and their government would be free...and that's what I said during an interview...10 years ago."

For the Mujahideen commanders and their troops who fought the Red Army, the focus shifted inwards and prosperity seemed to beckon amid high expectations the United States would not forget the men who fought the jihad.

Faisal Khan, who returned from India after the Soviet exit, said: "I believed home was like Switzerland, peaceful and mountainous, and that's what I dreamed of after the communists left."

He had been raised on his father's romantic notions of their homeland: his family had fled after the Soviets annexed Afghanistan on December 27, 1978.

Abdalli said expectations of US help were tempered by fears that Christianity would accompany foreign aid and undermine Islam in a country asserting its Muslim identity after years of enforced atheism by Moscow.

Pent-up religious frustrations soon emerged to form a potent mix with tribal warlordism and national aspirations — once anti-communist commanders set about the business of governing.

But their successive regimes pocketed what little outside aid was on offer, said Abdalli, who once belonged to Kabul's intelligentsia.

"The ordinary people who supported the communists were victim-

ized and then everybody was trampled on," he said, recalling the infighting among the former Mujahideen commanders which erupted into civil war.

Faisal Khan and his family returned to Kabul in early 1993 but by July fighting among Mujahideen factions had reached his front door.

"My uncle came around on July 3, 1993. My neighbour asked how he was. He said, 'I'm okay'. Then he was shot through the eye," he said.

"Death became normal. It was normal to see a dog walking down the street with a human leg in its mouth," Khan said. "Fifteen friends and relatives were killed within three days after my uncle died. I've stopped counting."

The civil war has since evolved into what military strategists term "a fluid situation", often leaving ordinary Afghans at a loss to explain why the bloodshed continues.

Anarchy extended into 1994, particularly in southern Kandahar, which inspired the Taliban to take up arms against the Mujahideen

factions. Faisal Khan, 24, said: "I now understand Afghanistan is not like Switzerland. It's a country of war and terror and although we should have hope because we are Muslims, it's very hard."

The Taliban hold more than 80 per cent of the country and are fighting commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

The law imposed by the Taliban is claimed to have improved security but the militia's hard line has upset the international community to the point where much-needed aid has been restricted.

Public executions are common, thieves are amputated, western dress is banned, women must be covered from head to toe in public while their access to health is limited and girls' schools have been closed.

"The people are afraid of the Taliban whip, it's like a bolt of lightning," Abdalli said.

"Now everyone should analyse security and what it means because poverty is extensive. It's in every one and everywhere." —AFP

DAWN 13 FEB 1999

NATION 20 FEB 1999

Taliban intensify campaign against drugs

From Shamin Shahid

PESHAWAR - In connection with the intensified campaign initiated on the directives of its Amirul Momineen Mohammad Omar against drugs and drugs abuse, the Taliban administration have claimed to have demolished 34 heroin-manufacturing laboratories and arrested around 15 people in Nangarhar, a border province of Afghanistan.

The campaign is termed a positive step of the Taliban, however, unless there are concrete steps to down the poverty rate and unemployment, it seems impossible either for Taliban or for the world organisations to combat production of opium, a major raw material for preparing the heroin.

The information about the demolition of 34 heroin-manufacturing laboratories were made in a ceremony in connection with the disclosure of Mohammad Omar's decree. The decree says "Those laboratories which convert opium gum into heroin must be disman-

ted in consultation with Abdul Hamid Akhonzada, Enrtae's High Commission for Drug Control with the assistance of central and provincial authorities".

Later, the participants of the ceremony including a large number of journalists and volunteers of the UNDCP visited various parts of Achm district where the demolished laboratories. The demolished were 9 in Wach Bandar, 8 in Jinjaal Shaga and four in Deh Sark of Achim district and three in Behar and 10 in Mamlay areas of Khogvani district, one of the commission's members informed.

Hamid Akhonzada, while responding to a question, said that have succeeded in demolishing all heroin-manufacturing laboratories in Nangarhar and they would now proceed to Qandahar for the same purpose. He accepted that still there exist these laboratories in uncontrolled and remote areas of Afghanistan. He was of the view that their administration is determined to continue its struggle till eradication of all these laboratories.

He further said that owners and staff of these demolished factories have escaped, however the authorities netted 15 of them. These arrested persons informed that they were working on daily wages in these laboratories.

To a question, Ain Ullah, one of the detained prisoners, said "They had no option but to go for heroin-manufacturing. There is nothing to eat as the whole region was affected by the war and there is no any other source of income for them here." He added, "They are compelled to work on daily wages in the heroin-manufacturing laboratories as we need two-time meal, despite knowing the bad impacts of heroin."

However, during a visit to Coach Bandar and other areas of Achin district, this correspondent has witnessed that local Afghans, mostly the Shinwari tribesmen, were under tremendous pressure. They were watching the activities of the visiting journalists and UNDCP volunteers away from the site. It came to know that the demolition of nine laboratories have rendered around 1500

people jobless. Similarly, the local tribesmen have termed the initiative against drugs a serious threat to the future of their poppy plants, the main source of livelihood for thousands of Afghan families of the war affected country.

Answering a question, Abdul Hamid Akhonzada termed these detained Afghans as innocent as all of them were daily wagers, however, he said that their fate could be decided by the judicial department of Afghanistan.

He avoided to comment when asked that what type of punishment he suggests for them, however, he said, "Juges of the court are well aware of their responsibilities and only they would decide their case."

To yet another question, he said that his commission is also determined to continue its efforts for the arrest of the remaining owners of the demolished laboratories. He confirmed that some local people were involved in joint ventures with the owners of these laboratories.

Taliban shut restaurants for prayers

KABUL (AFP) - Taliban anti-vice squads have temporarily closed down four Kabul restaurants because they were operating during prayers time, residents said Monday.

The mobile squads of the Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, known as the religious police, have locked the facilities for four days as a penalty, they said.

"They were locked because they were serving the customers during evening prayers," a shopkeeper said.

The religious police normally compel shopkeepers and shoppers to pray at the nearest mosque during the Islamic prayers, residents said.

NATION 23 FEB 1999

Afghanistan marks Soviet pull-out

KABUL (AFP) - Afghans marked the 10th anniversary of the Soviet withdrawal from their war-torn country on Monday in quiet remembrance.

The official Taliban-controlled press has afforded the event little coverage and locals say they prefer to remember the end of the "Jihad" holy war in their own way. However, rival faction leaders tried to momentarily put aside their differences and paid tribute to the 1.5 million Afghans who fought and died in the 10-year Soviet occupation up to February 15 1989. "It was a real victory against a super power," political advisor, Mohammad Eshaq, to the anti-Taliban alliance told AFP.

He said the anniversary would be remembered beyond the frontlines controlled by the alliance through prayers, special meetings and publications.

NATION

16 FEB 1999

Dispatches



hand grenade into the lobby of the Addis Ababa Hilton in order to rattle a group of journalists; how he knew Somalia so well that he was able to negotiate his way through the treacherous front lines in Mogadishu. Carlos had an ability to go native that impressed even teenage gunmen at roadblocks.

"His intelligence was an artistic intelligence, a human intelligence," says Stucke; "I was dead surprised when he said, 'I have a production company.' I'd always thought, 'This guy can't make it in the real world. But at the same time, he had absolute brilliance in those sensitive sides. He could relate to anybody. Wherever you went around the other side of the world, into the middle of the Asian jungle, and there'd be Asian rebels eating fermented monkey shit. He'd be right there, saying, 'Give me a taste.' It's like a national food for that tribe, and instantly he'd make a connection, and he'd look them in the eye and they'd look him in the eye, and they'd be blood brothers

in no time at all. His family doesn't have any idea about that part of him."

His family did, however, know about the heroin. He'd struggled with it since his punk days in London, but he'd always been able to keep it separate from the rest of his life. When he was with the mujahideen, he didn't touch anything, even cigarettes. And when Carlos was on assignment, he managed to keep his drug habits hidden from the people he worked with. Peter Jovenal never saw him use drugs, despite several long assignments with him, and neither did Leslie Cockburn, the *60 Minutes* producer who had sent him to Peshawar after the missile strikes. His use was intermittent and extremely well concealed.

"It wasn't until I made a film on the cocaine industry in Colombia, which Carlos shot, that I found out about his addiction," says Stucke. "He was one of those professionals and you come across them every now and then who have a serious, serious vice but somehow keep it under control. He wasn't loose all the time. He was adept at manipulating the scenario so that the nearest and dearest and colleagues and employers didn't need to find out about it."

Still, Carlos occasionally ran into trouble particularly after he'd suffered a disappointment, or when no one was around to see. In 1996 he went into Afghanistan to interview bin Laden, who had recently fled there from the Sudan. As it turned out, bin Laden had been taken in by a man known as Engineer Mahmood, Carlos's old commander during the jihad, and Carlos figured he might be able to score an

Carlos managed to film war footage that secured his place in the journalistic world.

Early on, Jovenal was reluctant to work with Carlos because he insisted on carrying a gun, but they wound up together in Liberia for three weeks—amid some of the most senseless street-fighting of the decade—and they got along well. Jovenal was impressed with Carlos's chameleon-like ability to immerse himself in a native culture, although this skill didn't always serve him well. The Gulf War broke out soon after their Liberia trip, so Jovenal and Carlos

decided to sneak into northern Iraq to get footage of the Kurdish refugee camps. As soon as they got to Turkey, Carlos bought himself a traditional Kurdish outfit, which immediately brought him under the scrutiny of the authorities. The Turks have been fighting the Kurds along the Iraqi border for most of the past century, and it was actually illegal to wear Kurdish clothing on Turkish soil. When the bus was stopped and searched along the Iraqi border, the soldiers dragged Carlos out and made him prove that he wasn't a Kurdish rebel.

Carlos spent the next few years shuttling from one hellhole to another: Burma, Rwanda, the Sudan, Somalia, Bosnia, Angola, Colombia. Stories about him began to circulate: how he ran through gunfire on a Somali beach to grab lobsters for his friends; how he rolled a dead



BROTHERS IN ARMS

Top: Mavroleon (right) and his friend Masood Farivar in Afghanistan in 1988. Above: Mavroleon (center) with mujahideen rebels in 1989.

"I've got footage from Carlos that shouldn't have been taken by any sane cameraman," says Mavroleon's former colleague Mark Stucke.

Taliban may set up women varsity

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - In third phase of their efforts to get the sympathies of international community, the Taliban leaders have decided to establish a Women University besides ordering for re-opening of the female educational institutions in all over that war-affected country.

Some highly-placed sources informed that after getting positive results of their two first steps included disappearing Arab militant Osama bin Ladin and demolishing 34 heroin manufacturing laboratories, now Talibaan

leaders are going to open an Women University at Kabul. In this connection, the authorities concerned are hunting for a suitable public building in Kabul to start work on establishment of the University.

After getting a suitable building, the Taliban leaders would give final touches to the proposed project. However, it is crystal clear that only female teachers and others could be allowed to work in that university. While the students would get education in medical, literature, Islamic thoughts and other fields.

Apart from going to establish an

women university, Taliban leaders are also finding out ways and means for reopening of the closed female schools and colleges in all over Afghanistan. In this connection, the provincial administration have been directed to take early steps for implementation of such decisions.

It is worth mentioning to note that earlier, in the light of Taliban's direct contacts with the USA Assistant Secretary for South Asia, have announced mysterious disappearing of Osama bin Ladin.

And in the second step, they announced demolishing of 34 heroin manufacturing laboratories. While struggling to get coverage of the heroin laboratories through media, some of the Talibaan leaders have not only invited the press photographers but even the video's for making movies. Even one of the Taliban leaders was also pictured, on this occasion.

Afghanistan's postal service restored

KABUL (AFP) - It still cannot afford bicycles for its postmen but Afghanistan's postal service has made a welcome return after eight years.

With a postal service to the outside world restored by the ruling Taliban, Kabul residents no longer need to make a one-day trip to neighbouring Pakistan to send or receive mail.

The international post is now carried by a weekly flight of the Afghan Ariana Airlines to Dubai and then sent all over the world, Postal Department chief Mawlawi Alladad Balkhi told AFP.

Letters from relatives or friends in other countries are also received here and delivered to homes, residents said.

The postal link was severed after the ruinous factional fighting engulfed the Afghan capital in 1992, Balkhi said.

Kabul's dilapidated Central Post Office is back in operation. Women wrapped in head-to-toe 'burqa' veils and men with untrimmed beards surround a huge table, writing addresses and sealing envelopes with glue.

"It is a big relief... saves time, money, and energy," said a man, scribbling an address on his envelope.

"Now we do not have to worry about going to Pakistan to just send mail or to ask somebody to do it for us," said a woman as she wrote the address of her brother living in Moscow.

A man said his letters to a cousin in Australia were reaching him regularly in 20 to 30 days. "It is very good now."

Most families have one or several members abroad. Close to three million Afghans still live outside as refu-

gees.

Safar Ali, standing in a queue to send a letter to his son in Iran, said that correspondence is very safe. "I have never found any of my letters opened by censors," he said.

Balkhi said his department was operating on the basis of "safety, secrecy, and speed" to promote public confidence in the postal service.

The outgoing parcels are, however, checked and print material requires permission from the Ministry of Information, he said.

NATION

21 FEB 1999

Taliban arms depot explodes outside Kabul

KABUL: A Taliban ammunition depot exploded at a military base outside the Afghan capital Kabul on Monday night, but the Islamic militia ruled out sabotage.

"The depot caught fire, and we could not do anything to extinguish or stop it," one Taliban official said.

He blamed the incident on "negligence" but gave no further details. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage from the blaze, residents said.

They said there were more than three hours of explosions behind a military academy, some 12 km east of the capital on the main road that links it to the eastern region and Pakistan.

"We could hear light and heavy blasts constantly, and thought fighting had erupted," Fahim, a resident who lives close to the site, told Reuters.

The base is also close to the so-called New Road, which leads to the front line north of Kabul where the Taliban and forces of opposition commander Ahmad Shah Masood are dug in.

Taliban fighters at the base prevented reporters from visiting the site of the explosion where several types of ammunition were stored on open ground inside a depot.

There have been several blasts in Kabul since the Taliban captured the city two years ago from Masood, the military head of the deposed government.

In 1997 a tank loaded with ammunition exploded outside a top Taliban minister's house, but he was unhurt. A few months ago a small ammunition store in front of the Cuban embassy, which is occupied by Pakistani Taliban followers, also blew up. — Reuters

NATION

23 FEB 1999

17 FEB 1999

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

NATION 24 FEB 1999

Repatriation and rehabilitation of Afghan refugees UNHCR running short of resources

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Assistant Commissioner of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees has confessed that UN has been running short of resources and now it is unable to help more than two million Afghan refugees, residing in various parts of the world, particularly in Pakistan, Iran and other regional countries.

This he said while addressing the elite of Afghan refugees at Nasar Bagh camp on Tuesday. Due to lack of resources and financial assistance from the world countries the UN is facing severe difficulties in provision of relief to the war-affected people. However, he was of the firm belief that

without complete peace in Afghanistan, it could be impossible for the refugees and displaced people to return.

Mr Soren urged the Afghans to pressurise their leaders for resolution of their internal differences through negotiations which is the sole way for repatriation of the Afghan refugees. He supported the idea of a broad-based government in Afghanistan for creating an atmosphere where the Afghans could get their just right of self-determination and return to their motherland with dignity and honour.

The UNHCR officer confirmed that in-fighting among the warring factions and lack of a broad-based interim government is the main hurdle before return of peace in that country and repatriation of the refugees. He said that so far, four out of six millions of the refugees have been returned to the war-ravaged Afghanistan.

Responding to the points raised in welcome address, Mr Soren Jessen admitted that the Afghan refugees living in Pakistan are faced with a number of problems due to lack of financial help and other relief activities. But at the same time, he expressed his inability to help the Afghans to get rid of such difficulties and problems. He said that responsibility rests with the Afghan nationals to pressurise their leadership for announcing a permanent cease fire.

The UNHCR officer, however, praised Pakistan for extending hospitality to millions of the Afghan refugees. He said that due to the host government's foreign assistance, the host government is also facing severe difficulties. Earlier, Haji Zahir Gul, a leading figure of the Afghan refugees highlighted the problems being faced by the refugees. He said that during and after jihad Pakistan helped them a lot and now as a result of continuous fighting and unrest in their motherland, it is impossible for them to go back. He urged the UN to resume financial help for them and pressurise the warring factions for early declaring a ceasefire to useless and meaningless fighting.

UN faces fund crisis to repatriate Afghan refugees

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations Refugee Agency has said its programme to repatriate some two million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan and Iran was facing a severe funding crisis because of lack of interest from donor countries, BBC reported.

The Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees, Soranyason Peterson, said that donor countries were showing a total lack of interest in the repatriation and rehabilitation of the Afghan refugees.

The host countries chiefly Pakistan and Iran were finding it increasingly difficult to bear the burden of sending the refugees to their country.

Last year the UNHCR received less than 50 percent of its funding

needs for the Afghan refugees. And so far this year, the organisation has received under 10 percent of what is asked for to fund its 1999 Afghan programme.

Peterson said this year the UNHCR has received just one donation from the Swedish government.

He said many of the Afghans in Pakistan and Iran were tired of living in exile and they want to return home. But after such a long period of war in their home country, there was now a need for a lot of rehabilitation work to provide returning refugees with basic facilities and means to restart their lives.

More than 2.5 million Afghans are living in Pakistan and Iran. — APP

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

27 FEB 1999

Afghans in exile fear harassment from Taliban

PESHAWAR: In the dead of night, two masked men scaled a 3-meter wall around the home of a prominent Afghan political activist living in exile and murdered his wife and 11-year-old son.

Police said the intruders sliced the telephone lines and slipped into the home of Abdul Haq, who was away. While everyone slept the gunmen fired seven shots. Five bullets struck his wife, one his son and the other their bodyguard. All three died.

No one claimed responsibility for the January 12 slaying and Haq was reluctant to blame anyone.

But many Afghan exiles in Pakistan, and the human rights group Amnesty International, say prominent Afghans and their families have been targeted by harassment, threats and shootings in recent months. They blame the Taliban that rules most of Afghanistan.

Taliban leaders, whose Islamic movement has been supported by Pakistan, deny the charges. They say their fighters are not operating outside Afghan territory.

"We are not interested in any other country. ... We have enough problems in our own country," said Abdul Sattar Paktianey, a spokesman for the Taliban's foreign ministry.

The victims of recent attacks in Pakistan, where 1.5 million Afghans still live as refugees, have in common opposition to the Taliban and the strict vision of Islamic law it has imposed on their homeland.

Like Haq they have supported replacing the Taliban regime with a broader-based government in Afghanistan and have strongly opposed Taliban restrictions on the life of women.

Among the recent incidents in Pakistan:

—The brother-in-law of Afghanistan's last communist president, Najibullah, who was hanged by the Taliban army, was slain.

—Gunmen shot into the home of Shah Bacha Shinwari, head of a moderate Afghan reconciliation commission, wounding his wife and son.

—The home of Satana Gul Sherzad, a leader of the Afghan national democratic party, was attacked but no one was injured.

—Several men attacked the home of Shah Agha Mujaddidi, a close relative of former Afghan president Sibghatullah Mujaddidi, a former anti-communist resistance fighter and a strong advocate of a broad-based government to replace the Taliban.

—Afghan women who have jobs in Peshawar have been threatened by stick-wielding men who claimed to be Taliban members and warned the women to quit work and stay at home.

—Fatana Gailani, head of the Afghan women council, a women's rights group, said her life had been threatened and she had been followed.

—The Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan, which seeks equal opportunity for women,

cancelled a rally in December in Peshawar after men claiming to be Taliban supporters threatened to break their legs if they went ahead with the demonstration.

—Female teachers at girls schools in Afghan refugee camps say they have been warned by men to teach the girls only verses from the holy Quran, and to end the girls' schooling once they reach age of 8. So far the teachers have resisted.

Police in the NWFP say the attacks and killings are not related, but some officials within the government suspect links to the Taliban.

Abdul Hafeez Arty, an official at the Afghan commissionerate, the Pakistani government department that looks after the 1.5 million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan, cited the Haq case as an example.

He said it was probable the Taliban "thought Abdul Haq could be a serious threat," thus the killings.

Amnesty International wants Pakistan to do more to protect Afghans, but Afghans exiles say the Pakistani government is reluctant to crack down on Taliban supporters. Pakistan is one of only three countries to recognize the Taliban government.

"This is the responsibility of the host country to look after the safety of those who live here. ... But there is not sufficient security," said Pir Ahmed Gailani, a moderate Afghan leader who has criticized the Taliban. "otherwise why are Afghans getting killed here?"—AP

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

18 FEB 1999

Afghan national shot dead

DAWN

By Our Staff Reporter

13 FEB 1999

KARACHI, Feb 12: A young Afghan national was shot dead and his uncle wounded in an attack here on Friday.

The Afghan nationals were fired upon in Suriya Textiles Mills in Gabol Town in Block-22, Federal B Area, where they were labourers.

The deceased was identified as Qadeer Khan, 18, and the injured as Noor Mohammed, 35. The uncle and the nephew had arrived in Karachi a couple of months ago from Afghanistan and since then they were working in factory.

The body and the injured were shifted to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital. Hospital sources said the young man had received two bullets, one went through his left shoulder and the other through his skull. He had died instantly, they said.

The sources said Noor Mohammed was hit a single bullet that pierced through his rib cage. Later, the injured was shifted to the Jinnah Post-graduate Medical Centre in view of his critical condition.

The injured told the police that he and his nephew belonged to Taliban and the attackers were of the rivals led by Dostum.

He said four attackers, three of them masked, entered the factory through a ventilator around 4am.

He said he and his nephew were asleep and there were about two dozen workers busy in their work in the factory when the attacker raided the factory.

The injured told the police that the attackers had first made everyone lie down at gunpoint and then came to him straight. The attackers, who had demanded money, opened fire when I asked them whether they were dacoits, he said.

The attackers after hitting him targeted his nephew as he ran to save his life.

Sub-Inspector Altaf Hussain, who is investigating the case, said the attack was apparently motivated by some personal enmity as the attackers had only targeted the uncle and nephew. The attackers were familiar with the building of the factory as they had also brought with them a ladder to sneak into the factory, he said.

The investigation officer said that only one of the attackers was

armed with pistol and he had fired three shots, empties of which were recovered from the spot.

He said the injured only spoke the Persian-influenced Pushtu language and the police had to engage a translator for recording his initial accounts about the incident.

The body of the Afghan national has been kept in the Edhi's morgue at Sohrab Goth.

Afghan refugees

WARSAW, Feb 20: Polish border troops on Saturday seized a group of 29 Afghan refugees apparently aiming to cross over into Germany. The report said the group had gathered at a village some four kilometres from the border point of Gora. Over the past few weeks Afghan refugees had been stopped on several occasions trying to enter Germany illegally.—dpa

DAWN

20 FEB 1999

Brahimi to visit Pakistan for talks UN team in Kabul to check security

KABUL (AFP) - A four-member delegation from the United Nations arrived in Kabul early Thursday morning, marking the UN's first official visit to the Afghan capital since August last year.

The delegation met ruling Taliban authorities at the airport but declined to comment on talks scheduled with the Islamic militia.

Local sources say the talks could pave the way for the UN's full return to Afghanistan later this month or in early March.

'It's simply a technical mission to check out the security conditions and progress on the investigations into the deaths of UN staff killed in 1998,' a UN spokeswoman said.

She said a full return would depend 'on how the Taliban can satisfy this team and probably others.'

The United Nations and most foreign aid workers were evacuated from Afghanistan following the August 20 US missile strike on suspected terrorist bases in the eastern Afghan province of Khost.

A UN officer was fatally shot by angry locals protesting the US action against bases which Washington says were operated by Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden.

The US has also posted a five million dollar reward for bin Laden's arrest.

NNI adds: UN Secretary-General's special emissary on the Afghan issue Lakhdar Brahimi will undertake a visit to the region later this month for talks on

the Afghan crisis.

Brahimi is expected to visit Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russian and Central Asian states in continuation of his efforts for restoration of peace in the war-ravaged Afghanistan besides Pakistan, UN sources said on Thursday.

The proposed meeting of so-called Six plus Two Group in Uzbekistan will also come up for discussion in the talks of the UN official.

Afghanistan's six immediate neighbours - Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, China, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan - formed the group along with the US and Russia under the aegis of the UN.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif chaired a high-level meeting Monday in Lahore, which reviewed regional situation with special reference to the Afghan issue.

Officials said the meeting observed that Pakistan's Afghan policy was sound and Islamabad would continue to promote peace efforts in the strife-torn country in collaboration with the neighbouring countries. Referring to the proposed meeting of Six plus Two group in Tashkent, the officials said some ideas had been floated which were under consideration in the concerned capitals.

Brahimi will also meet representatives of the Taliban militia, which control more than two-thirds of Afghanistan, and leaders of the anti-Taliban alliance during his forthcoming visit to the region.

UN team in Kabul to review security

KABUL, Feb 4: A UN delegation arrived in Kabul on Thursday for talks with the Taliban on the country's security situation.

A "technical observatory mission" will hold discussions with the Taliban over the killing of U.N. personnel in Kabul and Jalalabad, U.N. sources said.

The United Nations withdrew all of its expatriates from Afghanistan after military observer Carmine Calo, an Italian lieutenant colonel, was shot dead in Kabul in August.

A French colleague was wounded in the same incident, which followed US missile attacks.

Last July, two U.N. Afghan staff were killed in Jalalabad.

The Taliban say they have arrested two Pakistanis over the shooting in Kabul, but have no firm evidence to try them. The Taliban have yet to get to the bottom of the Jalalabad killings.

The United Nations says it will not rebase its international staff in Afghanistan until the killings are fully investigated.

The visit follows a meeting between UN coordinator Erik de Mul with the Taliban in Kandhar 10 days ago.—Reuters

DAWN

05 FEB 1999

NATION

05 FEB 1999

NATION 05 FEB 1999

UNO and WFP take various steps to avert atta crisis in Afghanistan

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR - In a bid to resist, the apprehended acute wheat floor shortage in the war ravaged Afghanistan, the United Nations as well as the World Food Programme initiated several steps.

The UNO weekly update regarding Afghanistan, issued here on Thursday states that the WFP succeeded in borrowing 2,500 tonnes of wheat from commercial mills and 800 tonnes of wheat from the CARE. Through such achievement, the WFP likely to counter the situation, erupted due to delay in the arrival of the first wheat shipment of 1999.

It further states that against any remaining shortfall, the WFP is continuing negotiations with the Government of Pakistan. Easing the dearth of mixed commodities is the arrival of 110 tonnes of edible oil in Pakistan and the loan of 100 tonnes of pulses from the CARE.

The WFP branch of Kabul released 1,650 tonnes of food for institutional feeding, food for work and bakery projects. Nearly 60 tonnes of wheat was released for UNHCR-WFP joint shelter projects in Khak-e-Jabbar and Musai of Kabul and Logar provinces. The WFP Herat, where stocks are sufficient, is loaning 73 tonnes of wheat to Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF), and released 55 tonnes of wheat for sanitation, health, education and food-for-work projects in Herat and Farah provinces of Afghanistan.

After the completion of the first phase of food distribution in the winter emer-

gency operation Baharak, the WFP is beginning food distribution in Jurm district of Badakhshan where the identification and registration of beneficiaries has been completed. The pipeline for this operation through Ishkashim remains open. The WFP has prepositioned 2,900 tonnes of food aid in different strategic locations in North Eastern Afghanistan in response to winter emergency needs in Badakhshan and Takhar provinces. It also informed that one of the three WFP Afghanistan vulnerability assessment teams will travel to Kandahar next week to assess the situation.

On the other hand, in response to the UN Assistance for Afghanistan appeal the Government of Japan has pledged one million US dollars for the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of Afghan refugees in 1998.

Meanwhile, the report states that a two day programme meeting was held in Quetta from January 26 to 28. The meeting brought together senior national staff from Faraha and Kandahar provinces of Afghanistan as well as UNDP and PEACE initiative projects head offices, to discuss opportunities to move principle concerned programming forward under the PEACE initiative. Participants agreed on a follow-up that would initially focus on a series of structural dialogue and advocacy meetings with representatives of community organisations in the programme area, possibly resulting in agreement on a series of small, confidence building interventions.

UN team leaves Kabul

KABUL, Feb 8: A United Nations delegation left Kabul on Monday after weekend talks with the Taliban about the return of its aid workers.

The four-member delegation declined to comment on the first visit to the Afghan capital since the UN's evacuation in August last year.

However, sources said talks had been constructive and could lead to a return of the UN, perhaps by next month.

The team included UN special investigator Michael Hall from New York, who checked on progress being made by the Taliban and their efforts to resolve security issues in Afghanistan.

This includes a militia investigation into the killing of an Italian UN officer just before the evacuation.—AFP

DAWN 09 FEB 1999

Fahd & Brahimi discuss Afghan issue

ISLAMABAD, Feb 19: King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and UN special envoy for Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi discussed the Afghan conflict in Riyadh, UN sources said on Friday.

Brahimi is scheduled to embark on an extensive visit of Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia to discuss the Afghan crisis and find a negotiated and amicable solution to the long standing problem.

His previous visit to Afghanistan was a moderate success as he succeeded in making the warring Afghan factions agree on exchange of prisoners of war. The process, however, later suffered a set back with the eruption of renewed fighting between the Taliban and their opponents.

The burning issue of Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden has overshadowed other problems and issues in the war-shattered Afghanistan. The western countries and the United States have now fully focused on bin Laden who has

been missing for the last few days.

The visit of Lakhdar Brahimi, the second during last three months is aimed at seeking views and opinions of the Afghan rival factions and other concerned parties to the conflict in a bid to make the forthcoming proposed Six plus Two Group meeting in the Turkmenistan capital, Tashkent a success.

Taliban officials during talks with the Turkmen Foreign Minister, Shikhmuradov in Islamabad had recently made it clear to him that they would take part in the proposed meeting provided they are invited as representative of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

The United Nations and a number of other countries, it may be recalled, still consider the deposed President Burhanuddin Rabbani as the head of a legitimate government of Afghanistan. The Afghan seat in the UN is still being occupied by Rabbani's envoy, Rawan Farhaid.—NNI

NATION 20 FEB 1999

UN sending relief for Afghan quake victims

By Nafees Takkar

ISLAMABAD — The United Nations and other international agencies have started sending relief supplies to the earthquake victims in parts of Wardak and Logar provinces 100 kilometres south of the Afghan capital.

On Thursday World Food Programme allocated 55 tons of wheat, beans and biscuits to 400 of the worst affected families in the quake-hit areas. UN international staff have been out of Afghanistan since August last due to US air strikes and subsequent murder of an Italian military observer. This week the UN sent four international staff members to Kabul to help coordinate quake relief efforts led by the Red Cross.

The relief supplies will include shelter and food to the scene of the earth-

quake. Priority needs are for the shelter material.

UNICEF, UNHCR and Habitat are sending shelter materials and blankets to contribute to supplies being distributed by the Red Cross movement. UN World Health Organization sent medicines to treat the injured.

The earthquake hit Afghanistan two provinces on February 11. On the Richter intensity its force was registered between 5.5 and 5.9. It rendered 30,000 people homeless and killed as many as 70 people.

The UN press release, however, said the casualty count had not increased beyond some 39 dead and 256 wounded. The UN is also preparing an appeal for the donor countries to assist the quake victims. It is, meanwhile, also assessing the security conditions in Afghanistan in order to send back its international staff members to that war-torn country.

NATION 10 FEB 1999

Brahimi, Sartaj discuss Afghan peace process

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — UN peace negotiator Lakhdar Brahimi, resuming his shuttle to the region Monday, held talks with Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz to broker a reconciliation in Afghanistan, officials said.

Brahimi, who was last here in October, discussed matters relating to stepping up efforts for peace in the war torn country, they said.

They exchanged views on the possibility of convening a proposed meeting of six Afghan neighbours plus the United States and Russia in Tashkent at a date to be decided later, the sources said.

The UN Special Envoy who is to stay for two weeks, also plans to visit Iran, Russia and some central Asian republics, they said.

Besides the US and Russia, the so called six plus two group also includes Pakistan, Iran, China, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

UN sources said the Algerian diplomat would meet representatives of the hardline Taliban militia, currently holding around 80 percent of Afghan land and fighting with opposition forces in northern Afghanistan.

Brahimi to visit Pakistan for talks on Afghan issue

ISLAMABAD (APP)—United Nations peace negotiator for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi arrives in Islamabad this weekend in continuation of his talks aimed at seeking a political solution to Afghan problem. UN sources said Monday. Brahimi will meet Pakistani officials and Taliban representatives during the visit that will later take him to Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russian Federation and Central Asian states.

NATION

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NATION 21 FEB 1999

UN aid helps Taliban drive against opium production

From Shamim Shahid

PESHAWAR – Although the Taliban administration after entering into a deal with the United Nations Drugs Control Programme (UNDCP) initiated a drive against heroin manufacturing laboratories, yet it was to take notice of the increasing opium production in their controlled areas.

In each and every part of Afghanistan, which has been facing an unending war for the last 20 years, growing poppy plants has become a major and sole livelihood source for the war-affected Afghans. During a recent trip to inside Afghanistan, this correspondent witnessed that from 80 to 90 per cent agricultural land of the country, particularly of the provinces known for production of quality opium, was under the poppy plants cultivation.

So far the UNDCP in collaboration with the Afghan government and a number of other NGOs has initiated a struggle for making aware the Afghans about the drug abuse and convincing them for cultivating alternate crops on their lands.

The UNDCP initiated work on such assignments in Achin, Khogyani and

Ghanikhel districts of Nangarhar province and similar number of provinces in Kandahar provinces.

But unless leg pulling for power is abandoned, it would be impossible for the UNDCP and other organisations to get 100 per cent outcome of their efforts. Besides its efforts for enabling the Afghans of growing NGOs cash crops on their lands with provision of technical and other input assistance, the UNDCP also provided an amount of one million US dollars. Through this amount, the Taliban authorities are carrying out a drive against the heroin manufacturing laboratories.

During a Press conference, Abdul Hamid Akhunzada, Chief of the Commission against Drugs, said that unless poverty and unemployment NGOs eradicated, it is impossible for Taliban government to prevent the farmers from producing opium or cultivating poppy plants on their lands.

In this connection, he confirmed contacts between the Afghan government and UNDCP and said that UNDCP and a number of other International NGOs have made several promises and commitments with them. He was of

the view that with honouring such commitments and promises, the world countries could help them eradicate poppy plants of its routes in all over the country.

Juma Khan, a farmer from Marko village, situated just on the Jalalabad-Peshawar Road, said that he owns 15 jareebis of land and now instead of poppy plants, he was helped by the UNDCP in cultivation of wheat, onion, vegetables and other cash crops. He said that so far he expecting much more from these crops but believe that his economic requirements at this stage could only be met with production of opium plants on his land. Besides such crops, he also cultivated poppy plants in his lands.

In response to a question, he said: "I am aware that production of poppy plants is harmful to the interests of human beings as it is converted into heroin. But I am helpless before the unlimited requirements of my family". He added that if he received satisfactory results of the NGOs crops this year, then he would stop production of opium on his all lands next year.

UNHCR asks Afghans to work for broad-based govt

F. P. Report

PESHAWAR - The assistant high commissioner for refugees has urged the Afghans to exert pressure on their leaders to resolve their differences through dialogue with a view to facilitate the formation of broad based government in Kabul and create condition for the return of Afghan refugees with dignity and honour.

Addressing the Afghan elders at Nasir Bagh refugees village the assistant high commissioner for refugees Soren Jesson Peterson said that the factional fighting and absence of broad based government in Afghanistan was hindering the return of Afghan refugees to their home land.

He said that some four million refugees had return to Afghanistan, however two million refugees were yet to be repatriated.

He also admitted that the Afghan refugees living in Pakistan were faced with a number of problems due to the squeeze of relieve assistance from the donor countries and the UNHCR. But at the same time, he expressed inability on the part of UNHCR to mobilize more resources for increasing relief of assistance of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

He said that the UNHCR and countries of the free world had to switch over their attention to the refugees in other parts of the world.

He said that the UNHCR and the donor countries generously provided relief assistance to the Afghan refugees during the last twenty years.

Likewise the government and people of Pakistan generously

contributed to the welfare of Afghans but now the relief assistance had to be scale-down in view of the resource constraint.

Earlier Haji Zahir Gul in his welcome address lauded the role of the government of Pakistan, UNHCR and donor countries for providing relief and succour to Afghan refugees in the wake of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan.

He lamented over the prolong civil strife in Afghanistan and urged the world community to continue relief assistance to the refugees living in Pakistan.

On arrival at Nasir Bagh the assistant high commissioner for refugees was received by Col. Hafceez Additional commissioner Afghan refugees and Syed Dilawar Shah Roghani district administrator for Afghan refugees.

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Brahimi, Sartaj discuss Afghan issue

ISLAMABAD, Feb 22: The UN special envoy on Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi who arrived here for talks on Afghan crisis met Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz at the foreign office and discussed with him his peace mission.

It is Brahimi's second visit to the region in three months. Before beginning his fresh peace mission, the UN envoy held wide-ranging talks with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia.

The visit will take him to Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia for talks on Afghan crisis and to find a peaceful solution to the long standing problem.

His previous visit to Afghanistan was somewhat successful as he did succeed at least in making the warring Afghan factions agree on exchange of prisoners of war. The

process, however, later suffered a set back with the eruption of renewed fighting between the Taliban and their opponents.

UN sources in Islamabad said that the visit of Lakhdar Brahimi is aimed at seeking views and opinions of the Afghan rival factions and other concerned parties to the conflict in a bid to make the forthcoming proposed six plus two group meeting in the Turkmenistan capital, Tashkent a success.

Taliban officials during talks with the Turkmen Foreign Minister, Shikhmuradov in Islamabad had recently made it clear to him that they would take part in the proposed meeting provided they are invited as representatives of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.—NNI

Brahimi to meet Taliban

ISLAMABAD, Feb 23: UN Secretary General's special envoy on Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi held substantive and intensive talks here on Tuesday with ambassadors of Six Plus Two Group as well as European Union and European Commission and Japan, based in Islamabad on ways and means to push forward peace process in Afghanistan and pave the way for a negotiated settlement of the problem.

"UN special envoy had substantive talks with the galaxy of diplomats from Six Plus Two, EU and EC," UN sources told PPI.

Matters relating to proposed Six Plus Two meeting in Uzbekistan, prevailing situation in Afghanistan and on-going efforts for bringing the war to an end among the embattled groups, restoration of peace and formation of a broad

based government came under discussion at the meetings.

The sources said Brahimi also held talks with Additional Secretary (Afghanistan) Iftikhar Murshed in foreign office and exchanged views on the situation prevailing in the war-shattered country with special reference to ways for bringing peace and reconciliation there.

On Saturday Brahimi will pay a one-day visit to Kandahar for talks with central leadership of Taliban in a bid to speed up the efforts for restoration of peace and resumption of dialogue process among the warring factions.

Answering a question, the sources said the UN official would proceed to Peshawar on a two-day visit on Monday next for talks with Afghan leaders based in Pakistan including Professor Sibghatullah

Mujadiddi, Pir Syed Gillani, Haji Mangal and officials from UN agencies and NGOs adding that various facets of Afghan issue would figure prominently.

On March 3, he will again meet ambassadors of Six Plus Two in Islamabad and brief them about the outcome of his talks with the Afghan leaders both in Peshawar and Kandahar. He is also scheduled to meet ambassadors of donor countries to Afghanistan in Islamabad and officials of the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) the same day on matters pertaining to reconstruction of the war-ravaged country.

On Thursday and Friday next, he is likely to meet Iranian ambassador in Pakistan Sirajuddin Moussavi and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif respectively.—PPI

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interview. The Associated Press gave him the assignment, and Carlos went into Jalalabad with a guide named Abdullah (the same Abdullah who had nearly been executed for being too close to the bombed training camps). According to Abdullah, Mahmood didn't arrange an interview with bin Laden, so Carlos retreated to his hotel room, where he started smoking heroin. Abdullah said that he had to go to the A.P. office in Islamabad in order to get paid.

About three years earlier, Carlos had gone to a drug clinic outside of London, and his doctor, Robert Lefever, swears that Carlos had not had a major relapse since then. But that depends on what you call a relapse. True, he was no longer injecting heroin in London—those days were over. But a little smoking from time to time? An occasional weeklong bender in Burma or Afghanistan? Almost certainly. Carlos worked in some of the biggest drug-producing countries in the world. It's inconceivable that he didn't dip into his old habit from time to time.

Not long before his death, a member of Carlos's family caught him smoking heroin in a bathroom. When the relative asked why he had turned back to drugs, Carlos replied, "Because I thought I could get away with it."

My first impression of Carlos was that he was mad," says Tannaz Fazaipour, whom Carlos had intended to marry after returning from Peshawar. Fazaipour is from a wealthy Iranian family that moved to England before the Islamic revolution of 1979. She met Carlos in London in 1996 shortly before he began working on a documentary about Cuba. "He turned up wearing a long Mongolian shepherd's coat at my house in London, but I knew immediately that we were going to go out—so much so that in my diary I stuck a picture of him on the day we met, knowing I would look back and say, 'That was the day I met him.' I could just tell by the way he was looking at me that he was, you know, *interested*. We spent five weeks together—morning, noon, and night—traveling across Cuba and back to the States. We sort of maintained professional relations until we got back to London. We spent Christmas together, and it kind of took off from there."

Until he met Fazaipour, Carlos's relationships with women had been predictably disastrous. He always went out with beautiful women from exactly the kinds of upper-class families that he loathed. "He's never had an Afghani peasant as a girlfriend," as Fazaipour puts it. Past girlfriends included Mary Richardson, who is now married to Robert Kennedy Jr.; Annabel Heseltine, the daughter of a for-

mer English deputy prime minister; and reportedly even Fawn Hall, Oliver North's infamous secretary during the Iran-contra scandal. Some of Carlos's girlfriends would tire of waiting for him to return from some war zone or another and break off the relationship. "He had this pattern of being very self-destructive when things were going really well," says Syrie Mavroleon, his half-sister. "He'd do something deliberately just to fuck it all up because he wasn't worth it. He had no self-worth. Carlos; he used to beat himself up terribly."

All that changed with Fazaipour. Within weeks of meeting her, Carlos told her that he wanted to get out of the high-adrenaline frontline work and do more documentaries. He started a company called Black Lion Television ("Mavroleon" is Greek for "black lion") and set about trying to get work from the major networks. According to Mark Stucke, the competition in this field is brutal: out of 900 or so such production companies in London, only 3 or 4 can truly be considered successful. Carlos's was not one of them. At 40, he was desperate for some sort of conventional success, and he was increasingly interested in having children. (Syrie had recently moved back to London with her two small children, and Carlos had started spending a lot of time with them. The experience affected him deeply.) On July 14, 1998, with Black Lion Television still struggling, he asked Fazaipour to marry him. She accepted, and they picked a date for the following November. The Mavroleon family trust enabled the couple to start looking for a house in London.

A week later, though, Carlos left for Africa. He had been assigned by England's Channel 4 News to shoot a documentary on the Sudanese famine. While he was there, Carlos also shot some footage on slavery and flew back to London via Nairobi. The Kenyan exit visa in his passport was stamped on August 5, two days before bin Laden operatives allegedly bombed the American Embassy in Nairobi. Carlos arrived in London, mailed his tapes, and quickly packed for a family vacation in Greece.

Every year the paternal side of the family gathers at Bluey's seaside property outside Athens—boat trips, long lunches, and lightning bolts of family tension. Carlos and Bluey got into a huge argument over the war in the Congo, and Syrie intervened—and her stepmother, Caroline, was eventually dragged into the fight. It took days to sort things out. Just before leaving, Carlos was jolted awake by a nightmare: he was driving a car very fast, and when he tried to slow down, nothing happened. His car had no brakes.

On August 20, Carlos and Tannaz caught a boat to Athens and then flew back to London; on the plane they heard about the cruise-missile strikes in Afghanistan. When Carlos walked into his tiny Chelsea apartment late that night, he had 14 messages on his answering machine—all from various television producers looking for footage from the destroyed camps. One of the messages was from Leslie Cockburn, the 60 Minutes producer who had worked with Carlos in Somalia and Afghanistan. (Cockburn is also a V.E. contributing editor.) Carlos immediately called her back. "I wonder why you're calling," he said sarcastically. "I have 14 messages on my machine, and I have a multiple Afghan visa."

Carlos told friends he had been offered £1,000 a day—a huge amount for him—and said that Cockburn and her crew would try to join him in Peshawar. In the meantime, Carlos would attempt to get into the camps as fast as he could. The next day, August 21, CBS pulled some strings at the Pakistan Embassy in London and got him a double-entry visa. Carlos picked up a satellite phone from CBS's London bureau, bought a Sony digital camera and 14 hours' worth of tape, and booked a first-class seat on Emirates airline. He left the next day, connecting through Dubai and landing in Islamabad the following morning. It was Sunday, August 23—three days after the missile strikes. Carlos hired a taxi for the three-hour drive to Peshawar and arrived by late afternoon. The first thing he did—even before dropping his bags off at Green's Hotel—was visit Rahimullah Yusufzai, a correspondent for a Pakistan newspaper called *The News International*. Yusufzai is a well-known reporter with excellent relations to the Taliban and, it is rumored, contacts with Pakistan intelligence operatives. As a reporter he is immensely knowledgeable; every foreign journalist arriving in Peshawar makes the pilgrimage—around the corner from Green's, down a back alley, up two dark flights of stairs—to the offices of *The News*.

Yusufzai immediately told Carlos that the Taliban were not letting foreigners into Afghanistan, and that his only chance was to walk across the border from a small town called Miram Shah. But he would still need permission to enter the tribal territories—and that was nearly impossible to get. The only alternative was to sneak in disguised as a local and cross the border undetected.

It was a long shot, but Carlos was convinced that if he could get into Miram Shah he'd be O.K. He knew a former commander named Jalaluddin Haqqani, who had helped to establish the first mujahideen

UN envoy to meet Taliban leadership

ISLAMABAD (AFP) - United Nations special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi will meet the Taliban leadership this week amid a regional push for peace in war-torn Afghanistan, UN sources said Tuesday.

The peace negotiator, who held talks with Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz here Monday, will travel to the southern Afghan city of Kandhar, base of Taliban chief Mullah Mohammad Omar, they said.

Brahimi's visit, his second to the region in five months, is believed to be linked to a proposal to convene a meeting of Afghanistan's six neighbours plus the United States and Russia at Tashkent.

The UN-sponsored group includes Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, China, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Brahimi also plans to visit Iran, Russia and some of the Central Asian republics in a bid to secure support for UN-led peace efforts in Afghanistan.

He is likely to meet Afghan opposition representatives during his visit to Iran in an attempt to bring the rival Afghan factions to the negotiating table. The hardline Islamic Taliban militia controls around 80 percent of Afghanistan. Officials said Pakistan had floated some ideas for the proposed meeting under UN auspices in the Uzbek capital but gave no details.

Brahimi's tour closely follows US Assistant Secretary Karl Inderfurth's talks with Taliban representatives in Pakistan earlier this month.

Inderfurth's talks focussed on extraditing Afghan-based Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, wanted by Washington over two deadly bomb attacks on US missions in East Africa in August.

Amid a recent spate of diplomatic activity on Afghanistan, the foreign ministers of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan have made consultative visits to Islamabad, the Taliban's main foreign supporter.

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UN, Pakistan hold talks on Afghan crisis

to the southern Afghan town of Kandahar on February 27 (Saturday) for talks with Taliban leaders. He will call on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Friday.

The UN envoy's previous visit to Afghanistan was somewhat successful as he did succeed at least in making the warring Afghan factions agreed on exchange of prisoners of war. The process, however, later suffered a set back with the eruption of renewed fighting between the Taliban and their opponents.

two" group's envoys and briefed them on his mission. The group comprises Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, China and the United States and Russia.

Before beginning his fresh peace mission, the UN envoy held wide-ranging talks with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. The visit will take him to Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia for talks on Afghan crisis and to find a peaceful solution to the long-standing problem.

He Brahimi is scheduled to proceed

ISLAMABAD (NNI) - The visiting UN envoy on Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi on Tuesday continued his talks with Pakistani and the Islamabad-based diplomats on Afghan crisis, UN sources said.

Brahimi, who embarked on his fresh peace mission on Sunday, met with Pakistan envoy on Afghanistan Iftikhar Murshid and discussed with him matters relating to Afghan turmoil, the sources said.

He held a meeting with the "six-plus-

NATION 24 FEB 1999

NATION 25 FEB 1999

UN volunteers resume relief work in Afghanistan

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - After a long time, the United Nations' volunteers have returned to Kabul for supervising the relief activities in Wardak and Logar provinces of Afghanistan.

The UN had evacuated its volunteers from Kabul, following the USA air strikes against the training camps near Khost on August 20, 1998 last. As a result of such air strikes, the Afghans staged demonstrations and attacked the UN office at Kabul which also caused death to a military observer from Italy.

The UN report, issued here Wednesday reveal that it along with other international agencies are sending relief supplies including shelter and food to the earthquake effectees of both the provinces away around 100 kilometres from

Kabul. Priority needs continue for shelter materials like plastic, tents, tarpauline and blankets. The WFP has sufficient stocks in hands and allocated wheat, beans and high energy biscuits to hundreds of the worst affected families.

The report further states that the UNICEF, UNHCR and Habitat have sent shelter materials and blankets to contribute to supplies being distributed by the Red Cross Movement. The WHO has been sending medical supplies to treat the injured and UNFPA has provided safe delivery kits. In addition, several other NGO's notably NPO, KJRC, NCA, ACLU, CARE, GAA and MEDAIR are assisting in the relief efforts.

Assessments on the extent of the area affected by the quake, registered between 5.5 and 5.9 on Richter scale,

continues as teams probe further into remote snowbound villages. After surveying 63 villages, international agencies estimate the number of heavily damaged and destroyed houses to be more than 5,800, meaning that at least 30,000 people are homeless. Ninety mosques were ruined, it remarked.

The casualty is currently estimated at 70 dead and some 500 wounded, low given the size of the earthquake since a tremor preceding the quake altered residents to flee their homes. However, more than 1,000 cattle, which share Afghan dwellings during the winter, were killed by collapsing structures. The UN is preparing an appeal for donor countries to be issued shortly after a full assessment of the scope damages, the areas affected and the needs of the residents has been completed.

Brahimi to begin fresh round of talks with Afghan groups

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

27 FEB 1999

ISLAMABAD: United Nations peace envoy on Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi is beginning a fresh round of talks with Afghan groups over the weekend following a series of meetings with Pakistani officials and diplomats of 'group of six-plus-two' countries in Islamabad.

A United Nations official said Friday Brahimi would visit Kabul over the weekend to hold talks with Taliban authorities. Brahimi, who arrived here Sunday last as part of his continuing shuttle diplomacy to broker elusive peace in war-ravaged country, held a preliminary meeting with Taliban's ambassador to Pakistan Maulvi Saeed-ur-Rehman Haqqani a few days back.

On his way back from Kabul, the UN official may stop in Peshawar and meet Afghan leaders including former president Sibghatullah Mojadeddi, Pir Sayed Ahmed Gilani and

others.

Earlier, he was scheduled to visit Kandahar, Taliban's headquarters in southwestern Afghanistan. However, the official said, Brahimi would now proceed to Kabul without disclosing the reasons for change in his schedule.

Brahimi had a rare audience with Taliban's leader, Mulla Muhammad Omar, in Kandahar in October last which led to the release of all Iranian nationals taken prisoners by Islamic movement after its chain of victories in northern Afghanistan.

The UN official's tentative itinerary does not envisage his visit to opposition-controlled areas. However, he may have meetings with the

leaders of anti-Taliban alliance in Iran on the second leg of his visit to the regional states. He plans to visit Iran, Russia and Central Asian Republics, according to UN officials.

Brahimi had met with Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz and discussed matters relating to Afghan problem. He has also held consultations with the Islamabad-based ambassadors of so-called six-plus two group. The proposed ministerial meeting of the group to be held in Uzbekistan came up for discussion.

Afghanistan's six immediate neighbours - Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, China, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan - formed the group along with the United States and Russia under the aegis of the United Nations. —APP

NATION 07 FEB 1999

Bridas likely to take over UNOCAL's shares

By Umer Farooq

ISLAMABAD - As Pakistan and Turkmenistan have demonstrated their political resolve to revive, \$2.5 billion gas pipeline projects, there are indications that Argentina's Bridas will re-enter the project by bagging left-over shares of UNOCAL—the American oil company which announced its withdrawal from the project last year.

Pakistan and Turkmenistan officials discussed the ways to revive the gas pipeline project during the recent visit of Turkmen Foreign Minister Boris Sheikh Muradov to Islamabad. Turkmen Foreign Minister discussed the gas pipeline project with Minister for Petroleum Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan and the

two sides agreed to convene a meeting of experts to discuss the modalities for commencing the project. The two countries in their talks about gas pipeline termed the project "symbol of close Pakistan-Turkmenistan cooperation and the foundation upon which future economic relations between the two countries will flourish."

The experts of Pakistan, Turkmenistan and representatives of Taliban administration will meet in Islamabad by the end of this month to work out the modalities of commencing the practical work on the project.

The representatives of international oil companies will also be invited to the project. "We have indication that Argentina's Bridas will take some of the left-over shares of UNOCAL," said a relevant official source while talking to

The Nation.

The consortium to lay 915 miles gas pipeline from Daulatabad (Turkmenistan) as field up to Mulkhan was formed in Turkmenistan in November 1997.

The consortium called Central Asian Gas pipeline includes Delta Oil Company of Saudi Arabia, 15 per cent, government of Turkmenistan 7 per cent, Indonesia Petroleum Limited 6.5 per cent, Iochu Oil Exploration Company limited of Korea 5 per cent and the Crescent Group of Pakistan 3.5 per cent. Last year American firm UNOCAL withdrew from the consortium citing hostilities in Afghanistan as the reason. UNOCAL had 46.5 per cent shares. Official sources said that Bridas may get some percentage of left-over shares of UNOCAL.

The route of the Pak-Turkmenistan

gas pipeline has roughly been identified. Officials told *The Nation* that it would pass through those areas of Afghanistan which are under the control of Taliban administration. "The tribes from whose areas the gas pipeline will pass through will be paid royalty for the project," said an official.

Because of the Turkmenistan's resolve to carry on with gas pipeline, it has shown great interest to work closely with Pakistan for the resolution of Afghan conflict. During Pak-Turkmenistan foreign minister level talks in Islamabad last month the two countries agreed that the restoration of durable peace in Afghanistan would open up enormous possibilities of economic and commercial cooperation between Pakistan and Turkmenistan.

In their talks the sides agreed on five points: 1) the restoration of durable peace and stability in Afghanistan was of utmost importance, 2) outside interference and the supply of arms to different factions in Afghanistan should be stopped completely, 3) necessary conditions should be created to facilitate the Afghans to decide among themselves a formula for durable peace. In this context meaningful dialogue should be promoted between groups which control territory in Afghanistan, 4) Six Plus Two should play a supporting role towards this end, 5) Pakistan, Turkmenistan and other neighbouring countries should work together to facilitate the realisation of these objectives by promoting intra-Afghan dialogue and by sending a joint missions to Afghanistan.

US asks Taliban to expel Osama

ISLAMABAD, Feb 4: The US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Mr Karl Inderfurth, met a high-ranking member of the Taliban here late Wednesday and demanded that the militia expel Osama bin Laden, Afghan and diplomatic sources said.

The meeting between Karl Inderfurth and Taliban deputy foreign minister Maulvi Jalil Akhund was the first direct contact between the two sides since US cruise missile strikes in August.

Akhund met Pakistani officials before talks with Inderfurth, Taliban sources said.

The Taliban has consistently vowed to protect its "guest" and accuses the United States of wrongly implicating him in the embassy bombings.—AFP

DAWN 05 FEB 1999

US official to meet Taliban

ISLAMABAD, Feb 2: A senior Taliban official is arriving in Islamabad on Wednesday for talks with the US Under Secretary for South Asian affairs Karl Inderfurth, diplomatic sources said on Tuesday.

Taliban deputy foreign minister Maulvi Jalil Akhund will represent Afghanistan's ruling Islamic militia in the talks with Inderfurth, the sources confided to NN.

The US deputy secretary of state Strobe Talbott left for Washington after concluding less than 24-hour visit to Pakistan while Mr Inderfurth stayed in Islamabad for talks on Afghan problem.

DAWN 03 FEB 1999

US talks to Taliban on Osama's whereabouts

By Our Staff Correspondent

WASHINGTON, Feb 17: Senior State Department officials met Taliban leaders in Washington on Wednesday to discuss whereabouts of Osama bin Laden, amid clear indications that the US was getting impatient and might strike at Afghan targets again soon.

Assistant Secretary Karl Inderfurth met Taliban's UN representative Abdul Mujahid after reports said the US believed Osama was still in Afghanistan and had not left the country, contrary to persistent claims by Taliban.

No immediate comment after their meeting was available but officials earlier said the US would again demand that the Saudi millionaire be expelled from Afghanistan and handed over to the US to be tried here.

It was Inderfurth's second meeting with Taliban leadership in two weeks. He had met the Taliban's deputy foreign minister, Mullah Abdul Jalil, in Islamabad on Feb 3 and had delivered what US officials had called "a tough message."

Indications of growing US impatience came in reports quoting US officials saying "there may not be too much time for the Taliban to act." Recently the US announced that countries harbouring terrorists may face all-out attacks on their facilities, not just on terrorist hide-outs.

One official noted that CIA Director George Tenet recently told Congress that Osama was planning new attacks against American facilities and they could happen soon.

Reports said the Taliban leader would be repeating the words of

Mullah Omar that Osama had disappeared and the government in Afghanistan did not know his whereabouts. The statement would be hard to believe, officials said.

The State Department has said that even if bin Laden leaves Afghanistan, that alone would not be enough for good relations with the Taliban.

The *Washington Post* on Wednesday said US intelligence agencies had disrupted planned operations by followers of Osama bin Laden and had stayed one step ahead of new threats through aggressive intelligence-gathering and cooperation with foreign authorities.

"US officials believe bin Laden remains in Afghanistan despite a report four days ago by a spokesman for the ruling Taliban government that bin Laden had 'disappeared,' the *Post* said.

It quoted US officials saying: "We are putting enormous pressure on his organization around the world. We have an enormous intelligence apparatus established to try to find him and his associates. Our intelligence has uncovered all kinds of stuff."

He added: "And when we find out about them, we take action with other governments to move against them. We do this all the time, seven days a week, around the clock. And it's working."

Senior US officials acknowledge that success can be declared only until the next terrorist attack. In public statements, leaders of the anti-terror effort are quick to caution that the war against terrorism can't ever be "won" in the conventional sense.

Taliban moves against Osama unacceptable: US

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The United States has said that Taliban moves to isolate Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden within Afghanistan were not acceptable.

"Our view is that what they have announced falls woefully short of what is required," State Department Spokesman James Foley told reporters.

"We have repeatedly made clear to the Taliban that Osama bin Laden should be expelled from Afghanistan immediately to a place where he can be brought to justice for his crimes," he said.

On Wednesday, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported that the Taliban had banned bin Laden, whom the United States has indicted for last year's bombings of US embassies in East Africa, from accepting visitors or having outside contact.

"Osama bin Laden has been disallowed to meet any visitors or other people," the Pakistan-based private information service said, quoting a decree issued by the office of Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar.

All communication equipment including his telephone and radio had been withdrawn, AIP reported.

Foley said the Taliban move was not enough for someone "who has killed innocent civilians and... has promised to continue killing innocent civilians."

He would not comment on reports that the United States had threatened military strikes against the Taliban if they did not expel bin Laden.

But Foley reiterated comments made last week by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who said Washington reserved the right to use force against terrorism.

"The United States will not hesitate, when necessary, to use force to respond to or defend against terrorist actions," Foley quoted Albright as saying.

NATION

13 FEB 1999

DAWN

18 FEB 1999

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

12 FEB 1999

US again presses Taliban to expel Osama bin Laden

WASHINGTON: The United States will again demand that Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden be expelled from Afghanistan when senior American and Taliban officials meet on Wednesday in Washington, officials said.

Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth will meet Abdul Mujahid, the Taliban's representative in New York, to reiterate demands that Bin Laden, who has been indicted for the bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania last year, be brought to justice, they said.

Inderfurth met the Taliban's deputy foreign minister, Mullah Abdul Jalil, in Islamabad on Feb 3 and delivered "a tough message which we hope the Taliban will respond to because it's in

Afghanistan's interest to expel Bin Laden," an official told Reuters.

The official said "there may not be too much time" for the Islamic militia, which controls most of Afghanistan, to act.

He noted that CIA Director George Tenet recently told Congress Bin Laden was planning new attacks against American facilities and they could happen soon.

The Taliban said on Saturday that Bin Laden had gone missing from his southern Afghan sanctuary, but denied it had bowed to US pressure and asked him to leave the country.

US officials said they did not know Bin Laden's current whereabouts and that Inderfurth would try to find out what the Taliban knew about his disappearance.—Reuters

US, students militia officials discuss Osama's whereabouts

WASHINGTON (AFP) - A senior US diplomat met in Washington Wednesday with an official from Afghanistan's Taliban militia to try to pry details from him on the whereabouts of accused terrorist Osama bin Laden.

State Department spokesman James Foley said Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Karl Inderfurth and New York-based Taliban representative Abdul Hakim Mujahid met in the State Department at Washington's request.

Inderfurth "will be seeking further information on the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden and will reiterate the strong message that ... bin Laden must be brought to justice for his crimes," Foley said. He noted that the subjects discussed would follow those in Inderfurth's first meeting with a Taliban official earlier this month in Pakistan.

"The presence of bin Laden in Afghanistan has been detrimental to the interests of the Afghan people and poses a major obstacle to the Taliban in its desire to gain greater international acceptance," Foley said.

"The presence of bin Laden anywhere but in the hands of justice is unacceptable to the United States."

Foley added the meeting was requested following conflicting weekend reports that bin Laden had left Afghanistan.

US rules out Taliban govt recognition

From SIKANDER HAYAT

ISLAMABAD - The United States has ruled out recognition of Taliban government in return of their cooperation to extradite Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden.

The State Department spokesman, transcript of whose briefing on Wednesday was released here by the USIS, said the US policy concerning Afghanistan remaining unchanged "which is that we don't recognise any particular faction as the official legitimate government of Afghanistan."

He was asked if Osama Bin Laden is handed over to Washington by the Taliban, would that trigger move towards the recognition of the student militia government.

The spokesman insisted that the question of recognition would be decided on the "basis of working with UN Secretary General's representative Brahimi, on the basis of reconciliation, dialogue, discussion among parties, as a predicate to the constitution of a broad-based government in Afghanistan".

The spokesman did not agree with a suggestion that in line with the US policy of dealing with anyone who is in control of territory, the Taliban deserve the American recognition. "I didn't say they (Taliban) were in control of all of Afghanistan," he added.

FRONTIER POST

12 FEB 1999

To the question what are Washington's expectations from Pakistan the spokesman said, "we always urge our Pakistani friends to exercise that influence (inside Afghanistan) in the interest of our common interest against terrorists".

FRONTIER POST 18 FEB 1999

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

19 FEB 1999

US rejects Taliban claim on Osama

By Nayyar Zaidi

WASHINGTON: Senior US officials have said that they refuse to accept the Taliban claim that Saudi dissident and alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden has "left" Afghanistan, saying "we have no evidence to support the Taliban claim."

Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Karl Inderfurth met with Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, a Taliban representative at the United Nations, in an effort to trace the whereabouts of Bin Laden and was simply told "We do not know where he is."

Mujahid claimed that Bin Laden "decided himself to leave. He is not in the area controlled by Taliban."

Explaining the need for this meeting, a State Department spokesman said: "We have no information about his (bin Laden's) current whereabouts. But given some of the press reports that came out of Afghanistan and the region over the weekend, we felt it was necessary to ask Taliban directly what they knew about his whereabouts."

He added: "We do not have information that he is not in Afghanistan. We believe that it is the responsibility of the Taliban inside Afghanistan to ensure that he is expelled and brought to justice for the horrible and unspeakable crimes that he has committed against civilians."

Even though the US officials do not believe Taliban are speaking the truth, they see the claims of ignorance about Bin Laden's whereabouts as a sign of Taliban trying to distance themselves from the alleged terrorist.

Meanwhile, a key Republican staffer has urged the government to focus its counter-terrorism efforts not so much on the person of Osama bin Laden but on the states "including Pakistan, Iran and Sudan, who sponsor Bin Laden."

Yossef Bodanski, Staff Director of the House Republican Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, was quoted by The Washington Post: "We are working with allies and

not-so-allies and yes consequently some people have been arrested and some operations have been thwarted."

"Having said all that, Bin Laden is an instrument of sponsoring states. He is not a lone ranger or free agent. Even if we whack Bin Laden, we are not going to solve the problem as long as these states have an interest. There will be more of them."

Same views were expressed by Chairman of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Congressman Porter J Goss, although he did not name Pakistan.

"Regularly I get briefings on successes we are having all around the globe where yet another cell has been wrapped up or a bombing thwarted. But neither those who brief me nor I think we have a good handle on the scope of things going on in this netherworld of terrorist and rogue states," Goss said who himself is a former CIA case officer.

US may attack Afghanistan again

BANGKOK, Feb 25: US joint chiefs of staff chairman General Henry Shelton declined on Thursday to rule out more raids on Afghanistan if alleged Saudi extremist Osama bin Laden is found to be sheltering there.

Shelton, speaking at the US embassy in Bangkok during a three-day visit, said the United States would use whatever means necessary to "dismantle" bin Laden's organization.

"Osama bin Laden, wherever he is, as far as we are concerned is a terrorist and should be dealt with

by the international community, which includes the United States," he said.

"We will deal with him with whatever means we feel appropriate," the general said when asked if the United States ruled out further missile strikes against Afghanistan.

Bin Laden is believed by the Washington to be responsible for the bombings of two of its embassies in east Africa on Aug 7, which left more than 200 people dead.

Taliban officials earlier this month reported the Saudi dissident, whom they had been shelter-

ing, had "gone missing" and his whereabouts were unknown.

They said no pressure was put on bin Laden to leave the country despite repeated efforts by the US to extradite him to stand trial for the embassy bombings.

His continued residence in Afghanistan raised local fears of another US military strike.

Osama was believed to have been living in Kandahar, the Taliban's de facto base in southern Afghanistan, since the US last year launched retaliatory missile strikes against his base in Afghanistan.—AFP

DAWN

26 FEB 1999

10

years on

At the time however, the intervention was presented in official propaganda and the media as a "error" by the then Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev.

However the first casualties and most of all the ill-famed zinc coffins, soon dispelled any doubts about what the Russian troops were really doing in Afghanistan, even though the Communist Party Central Committee forbade any mention of gravestones about now or where the men had died. Between 1979 and 1989 1

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Other victims of the war are estimated at 300,000 refugees, generally Serbs who fled to Poland after the regime's fall.

These refugees who are generally well-educated and include doctors, teachers, engineers, 1992, about 4,000 former Soviet military personnel returned to Russia after the collapse of the Najibullah regime.

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...and weakened the international status of the Soviet Union." "The main victim of this war was the army," said military expert Valentin, of the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Economics and Statistics. "It cost 500,000 lives."

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Russia marks 10th anniversary of Afghan pullout

16 FEB 1989

FRONTIER POST

MOSCOW (AFP) - Hundreds of Afghan war veterans filed through the streets of Moscow on Monday as Russia commemorated the 10th anniversary of the Soviet pullout from Afghanistan, a military defeat that scarred a generation.

Around 500 veterans marched from Pushkin Square in downtown Moscow to the walls of the Kremlin to mark the end of the humiliating 10-year Soviet Afghan adventure, which has been likened to the traumatic US involvement in Vietnam.

Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov and Kremlin chief-of-staff Nikolai Bordyuzha laid wreathes at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier along with a host of government ministers and military top brass.

The ceremonies were called to commemorate February 15, 1989 when General Boris Gromov became the last Soviet soldier to cross the Amu Darya river into Uzbekistan to end Moscow's ill-fated decision to buttress the Communist regime in Kabul.

Between 1979 and 1989, 14,000 soldiers were killed and 50,000 were wounded on the Soviet side and about one million Afghans died, according to Russian sources.

The war and the humiliating retreat marked the beginning of the end of Soviet muscle and heralded a decade-long decline of Moscow's military might, firstly in its former satellites and latterly in the ex-Soviet republics which have all gained independence.

"The Afghan tragedy has been followed by tragedies in the former Yugoslavia, in Chechnya and in Africa, and the suffering of the Iraqi people continues," said former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, Interfax reported.

Gorbachev, the last Soviet leader and head of state at the time of the pull-out, said a plethora of regional conflicts around the globe showed that Russia and the international community had not learnt the lessons of the war.

The anniversary was marked in a series of ceremonies across Russia.

In Saint Petersburg, the foundation stone was to be laid at a chapel commemorating the thousands of servicemen killed during the 10-year conflict, while in Stavropol, in southern Russia, the authorities named a square in memory of those missing in action and laid the first stone of a memorial, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

Russia marks 10th anniversary of withdrawal from Afghanistan

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"The Afghan tragedy has been followed by tragedies in the former Yugoslavia, in Chechnya and in Africa, and the suffering of the Iraqi people continues," said former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, Interfax reported.

Position on Taliban unchanged, says Iran

04 FEB 1999

DAWN

TEHRAN, Feb 3: Iran's first direct talks with the Taliban do not spell a change in Tehran's policy towards its war-racked neighbour, the foreign ministry insisted here on Wednesday.

"No, the fact that this meeting took place with the representative of an Afghan faction does not mean that we have changed policy," ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told state radio.

"These direct talks between (senior Taliban spokesman) Maulawi Wakil Ahmad and two Iranian diplomats were held at the repeated request of the Taliban," he said.

Iranian officials met Wakil Ahmad at an Iranian diplomatic mission in Dubai on Tuesday following a call from the militia last week for an improvement in their troubled relations, the official Iranian news agency IRNA reported.

Tehran continues to demand the formation of a "broad-based coalition government" in Kabul including the opposition, as called for by the so-called six-plus-two group made up of Russia, the United States and Afghanistan's six neighbours, he said.

"Iran's condition for a dialogue with the Taliban is that it identify and punish those responsible for the murders" of eight Iranian diplomats and a journalist in Afghanistan last year.

"Now we are waiting for them to honour their pledge to identify those responsible for the murders of the Iranian nationals," he said.

The Iranians' murder during the Taliban's capture of the key northern Afghan town of Mazar-i-Sharif last August prompted Tehran to mass tens of thousands of troops on the Afghan border.

Tehran, which has backed opposition forces fighting the Taliban in the Afghan civil war, has had no direct contact with the militia since its capture of the Afghan capital in 1996.

There has still been no word from the Taliban on the talks announced by Iran.

The Taliban foreign ministry last Wednesday called for improved relations, saying the militia were ready "to negotiate with the

Iranian authorities toward solving all problems" between the two countries.

Iran gave a guarded welcome Sunday to the call, saying "there are no obstacles" to a dialogue as long as the Taliban meet Iran's condition of arresting and punishing the Iranians' killers.

Iran accuses the Taliban of mass killings of Afghan ethnic minorities, particularly the Shia Hazara community, and of imposing a barbaric mediaeval regime which tarnishes the name of Islam.

Tehran also accuses the militia of engaging in wholesale drug trafficking and of swamping its borders with opium and heroin destined for the Gulf countries and Western Europe.—AFP

Iran invites warring Afghan factions to talks

PARIS, Feb 5: The Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi has invited warring Afghan factions to come to the negotiating table for settlement of crisis in Afghanistan.

Addressing a press conference here on Friday, after talks with French President Jacques Chirac and the United Nations Secretary General's special envoy on Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi, Mr Kharrazi said the warring Afghan factions should hold extensive dialogue among themselves. "We are all required to convince the belligerent Afghan groups for establishment of legitimate government in Afghanistan", he observed.

Mr Kharrazi referred to talks between Taliban spokesman Wakil Ahmed Mutawakkil and Iranian diplomats in Dubai few days back and said these were held, what he called, "on the repeated requests on the part of the Taliban".

Iran has been stressing that unless the Taliban arrest and punish the murderers of Iranian diplomats in the Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif in August last year, holding of extensive talks with them are out of question and that these talks do not mean the recognition of Taliban regime.—PPI

DAWN

06 FEB 1999

Iranian officials meet Masood

TEHRAN (AFP) - Iranian officials have met Afghan opposition leader Ahmad Shah Masood for the first time since Tehran held its first direct talks with the Taliban militia which controls most of Afghanistan, the official IRNA news agency reported Sunday.

The meeting in Afghanistan on Saturday focused on 'current developments' in the country and 'new strategies' to 'ensure peace and security' after 20 years of civil war, the news agency said.

Iran, which supports Masood's forces against the Taliban, announced it held its first direct talks with the militia in Dubai in early February, though there has still been no word from the Taliban on the meeting.

Relations between Tehran and Taliban have been severely strained since the killing of eight Iranian diplomats and a journalist following the militia's capture of the opposition stronghold of Mazar-i-Sharif last August.

Tehran has called on the Taliban to find and punish the perpetrators of the murders, which prompted Iran to mass hundreds of thousands of troops on the Afghan border last autumn.

Tehran also continues to demand the formation of a 'broad-based coalition government' in Kabul including the opposition, as called for by the so-called six-plus-two group made up of Russia, the United States and Afghanistan's six neighbours.

Iran accuses the militia of engaging in wholesale drug trafficking and of swamping its borders with opium and heroin destined for the Gulf countries and Western Europe.

Like most members of the international community, Tehran continues to recognise the government of ousted president Burhanuddin Rabbani, whose forces are led by Masood.

NATION

15 FEB 1999

Moot on Afghanistan begins in Tehran

TEHRAN (NNI) - A 3-day conference of Afghan Shiite and Sunni scholars began Monday in Tehran, reports Radio Tehran.

The conference will discuss current political and military situation in Afghanistan with a special reference to the role of the neighbouring countries in restoring lasting peace and security in the war-ravaged Afghanistan.

NATION 23 FEB 1999

Pakistan keen on peace in Afghanistan: FO

ISLAMABAD (APP)-Pakistan is keen to see elusive peace return to war-torn Afghanistan and has taken many solid steps to realise the objective.

Pakistan has been recognised by Afghan neighbours as, "the major player," for promotion of the Afghan peace process, said Foreign Office sources here on Tuesday.

"It also conclusively debunks the notion that Pakistan is isolated because of its Afghanistan policy," they said.

Recounting various initiatives taken by Nawaz Sharif, government to promote efforts for restoration of peace, the sources said, Afghan leaders on both side of the political divide gathered in the Federal Capital to discuss Afghan crisis.

These efforts, they said, culminated in the meeting of a Steering Committee to work out the modalities for an Ulama Commission to seek a solution to the Afghan problem in accordance with the Shariah.

"This was a significant breakthrough which unfortunately was derailed because of the intransigence of one of the component parties of the Northern Alliance," said FO sources.

Another initiative was jointly launched by Pakistan and Iran to promote peace in Afghanistan. Progress was made but then the hostilities broke out between the warring factions.

Citing Nawaz Sharif initiative, FO sources said, in October 1998 UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi visited the region to discuss ways for restoration of peace there.

They said, it were Pakistan's endeavours which led to a highly successful meeting between Brahimi and Taliban

Supreme leader Mulla Omar. In order to defuse Iran- Afghan standoff, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif immediately sent Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz to Tehran in September 1998. The Prime Minister himself had a successful meeting with President Muhammad Khatami at New York in September 1998 which prevented the two Islamic brotherly countries from engaging in an armed confrontation.

An agreement was signed between Taliban and the UN for resumption of UN humanitarian operations in Afghanistan.

Taliban have accepted the deployment of human rights monitors in Herat, Kandahar, Jalalabad, Mazar-i-Sharif, Bamyan and Kabul. The Taliban have also agreed to the implementation of the "Points of Common Understanding" reached during the Ministerial level meeting of the "Six Plus Two" at New York.

Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmed visited Tehran from January 2-4, as the Special Envoy of the Prime Minister and held talks with the top leadership in Iran, including the President, Foreign Minister and Deputy Foreign Minister.

During the talks the two sides expressed their desire for the restoration of durable peace in Afghanistan under a government which is friendly to the two countries. At regional level, Nawaz Government's sincere and hectic endeavours resulted in visits of the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs to Central Asian Republics during August and November 1998 as a follow up of UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy Brahimi's successful visit to the region.

Ban on Afghan Transit Trade opposed

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR - Chairman of standing committee on dry port Zia-ul-Haq Serhadi has demanded of the government not to impose ban on Afghan Transit Trade out keep vigilant eye over smuggling through borders and take appropriate action against those involved in this activities. In a statement issued here on Monday he said that most of the goods are being smuggled through Balochistan, Sindh and Punjab particularly the Islamabad Airport was the main route.

He added that ban on the transit trade would definitely increase unemployment in the country and instead of stopping it would further increase smuggling of foreign goods. He said that ban on transit trade damaged the Pak railways and Karachi port trust and unemployed many persons involved with this trade in various capacity. He added that Afghanistan has no sea port facilities so according to 1958 agreement, they were using Pakistan route.

He said that many countries in the world were using such facilities of the neighbouring countries but due to strict laws the smuggling remained zero while in Pakistan the smuggling of foreign goods at peak due to the ineffective laws and corruption.

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Dispatches

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training camps years earlier. Haqqani was still in control of a camp called Zhawar, across the border from Miram Shah. Carlos told Yusufzai that he would present himself at Haqqani's compound in Miram Shah and ask Haqqani to take him into the camps. As with Engineer Mahmood two years before, Carlos hoped to use his connections as a former mujahideen to get in. He spoke Pashto, dressed—and looked—Afghan, and was one of the only journalists in the world who had fought with the mujahideen.

After talking to Yusufzai, Carlos checked into Room 304 at Green's Hotel and called Leslie Cockburn to tell her he'd arrived. He told her that the border was closed, but that the next morning he was going to request permission to enter the tribal territories. He said he'd call her when he knew more. One could imagine him falling into an exhausted sleep and waking up just before dawn, the streets still quiet and the Islamic call to prayer drifting over the city. It's an ancient, quavering sound that must have awakened in Carlos the most vivid, powerful memories. This was his big chance: he was in a position to get footage that no one else in the world had access to. It would firmly establish Black Lion as a force in television news, and it would give him the kind of self-made financial security—and respect—he'd craved for years. He was 40 years old and about to get married. He could not screw this up.

The next morning Carlos took a motorized rickshaw to an ugly concrete building off Jamrud Road, where the tribal administration is located. The authorities told him flat out that he could not enter the tribal territories. It was the same tired old game: the tribal territories had remained off-limits throughout the entire war, but it was the only way journalists could get into Afghanistan, so they'd been ducking the authorities there for years. Most journalists at the time grew beards and wore turbans; a few even dressed like women.

Undaunted, Carlos went straight from the home secretary's office to Yusufzai's and asked one of the other journalists there—a young man named Arshad Ayub—if he would accompany him into the camps. Ayub told Carlos that it was too dangerous, but he would help him find a driver with a Toyota four-wheel-drive pickup—a "Hi-Lux," as they're called. Hi-Luxes are the favored vehicles of the warlords and gunmen in Afghanistan. Carlos hired a driver and a Toyota, grabbed his satellite phone and video cameras at Green's, and probably left Peshawar within the hour.

By nightfall, Carlos had gotten as far as the old oasis town of Bannu, where he

checked into the Aamer Hotel. The next morning, according to his receipt book, Carlos spent 180 rupees (roughly \$3) on a cassette tape for the driver—"to prevent passenger from incipient madness," he noted—and \$8 on a stethoscope. The stethoscope would be part of his disguise to slip into the hospital in Miram Shah. The missile strikes had killed 26 people and wounded scores of others, many of whom had been brought across the border to the hospital in Miram Shah. If Carlos couldn't get into the camps, at least he might be able to film some of the survivors in their hospital beds.

Carlos ate lunch in Bannu, boarded a bus, and by midafternoon was bouncing toward Miram Shah. The road leaves behind the irrigated fields and dusty plains of Bannu and climbs up into the dead brown mountains of North Waziristan. The people there are wild and well armed, and the Pakistan police have no authority at all; men carry machine guns as if they were farm implements or cricket bats. A little higher up into the hills stand plots of date trees, heavy with fruit, and walled family compounds surrounded by fields of dark, plowed-over earth. Behind them are the mountains of Afghanistan, barren except for occasional fingers of vegetation. It would be impossible for anyone undertaking a mission like Carlos's to look at those mountains and not feel dread.

"He was found out immediately," says Yusufzai, who was in regular phone contact with Carlos that day. "It is not easy, you know, to stay hidden in Miram Shah. Besides the political administration, there are these [intelligence officers] in civil dress—on the border, in the bazaar, on the road, at the checkpoints. Carlos may have stopped in the bazaar to buy something, I don't know, but he was found out immediately."

Already aware that he was being tailed, Carlos dropped by the hospital and then went straight to Haqqani's home, located in a whitewashed compound on the outskirts of Miram Shah. Carlos knocked on the door and was greeted by Haqqani's son Hussain, who said that he'd missed Haqqani by 10 minutes. Hussain invited Carlos in for tea, and while he was there two intelligence agents came to the door and demanded to know if Carlos had permission to be in the tribal territories. Carlos said no. The two men left and returned a short time later to arrest him. In the interim, he left a message on Leslie Cockburn's answering machine: "I'm in a very bad situation," he warned her. "They're onto me in a big way."

Pakistan officials disclosed little information about Carlos's detention, although his

See Next Page

Kharazi, Sartaj discuss Afghan peace

Pak-India dialogue to help reduce tension: Iran

DHAKA: Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi Saturday welcomed the recent Indo-Pak talks and hoped that the dialogue process will help reduce tension between the two countries.

Iranian official news agency IRNA reported that Kharazi in his meeting with his Pakistani counterpart Sartaj Aziz renewed Tehran's appreciation to the meeting between Prime Ministers Nawaz Sharif and Atal Behari Vajpayee.

"Indo-Pak talks would pave way for bringing closer the two neighbouring countries," the news agency quoted Kharazi as saying.

The Iranian Foreign Minister briefed Sartaj on his recent visit to India and the proposed Tehran-Delhi gas pipeline via Pakistan.

The two sides also discussed the prevailing situation in Afghanistan and the Iranian Foreign Minister expressed serious concern over the con-

tinued hostilities in the war-ravaged country.

He renewed Tehran call for the negotiated settlement of the Afghan turmoil and said that all Afghan groups should be facilitated to hold talks.

Kharazi said that instability in Afghanistan has led to the promotion of drug trafficking and arms smuggling in the region, stressing the need for coordination among the neighbouring countries to restore lasting peace in Afghanistan.

IRNA quoted Kharazi as telling the Pakistani foreign minister to punish those who are involved in the killing of Iranian nationals in Pakistan.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz assured his Iranian counterpart that Islamabad would punish the killers of Iranian nationals.

Sartaj showed interest to hold more discussion with Iran on the proposed Tehran-Delhi gas pipeline.—NNI

NWFP govt bans flour supply to Afghanistan

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR — In a bid to control the acute wheat flour shortage in the province, the NWFP government has declared an unannounced ban on supply of wheat flour to Afghanistan.

Official sources informed that the NWFP Chief Secretary has directed the political agents of all tribal agencies to stop supply of wheat flour to Afghanistan. In this connection, the authorities concerned were also directed to intensify patrolling and security on the all entry points to Afghanistan.

Besides issuing strict directives to the political agents, the Chief Secretary has also directed the civil administration of all districts, bordering the tribal agencies and regions to discourage supply of wheat flour to such areas as from tribal areas these items being poured into Afghanistan.

NATION

08 FEB 1999

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

28 FEB 1999

West believes Osama still in Afghanistan

FRONTIER POST

17 FEB 1999

From SIKANDER HAYAT

ISLAMABAD - A western diplomat said here Tuesday that contrary to the impression being given by the Taliban the Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden is still in Afghanistan.

In a briefing to reporters he also ruled out the possibility that he might go to Iran or Iraq, but he was not sure if Osama's next destination might be semi-independent former Soviet republic of Chechnya.

The diplomat said it was not true that the Saudi dissident "went missing", as claimed by the

Taliban, because an attack by the United States forces was imminent. But he thought that the Americans would not give up hunting Osama bin Laden till he was captured.

Asked how could he say that Osama did not go to Iran. His reply was that Iranians themselves had categorically stated that he did not come to Iran. About the possibility of Osama reaching or planning to seek refuge in Iraq the diplomat said the "threshold" of strike against Osama in that country was very low, and that would discourage him from going there.

Of late there have been con-

flicting reports about Osama's whereabouts. Some said he has fled Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, while others suggested that he crossed over to Iran. The Taliban leadership said that he has "gone missing" for the last five days.

When asked his views on Pakistan's assertion that Osama bin Laden is an issue between the Americans and Afghans and Islamabad has nothing to do with it the diplomat said that the US understood that Pakistan has great influence over the Taliban and Washington expects it to use that influence against Osama.

Taliban not allowed to open office in London

By Our Staff Correspondent

LONDON, Feb 10: Britain has refused to allow the Taliban government in Afghanistan to open an "agency" in London and instead asked them to hand over Western-trained warrior Osama bin Laden to the United States, a British newspaper said on Wednesday.

British Minister of State at the Foreign Office, Mr Derek Fatchett, who is currently visiting Pakistan, met Taliban Vice-Minister Abdur Rehman Zahid at the British High Commission in Islamabad and used this opportunity to present a list of British demands if relations were ever to improve.

The Telegraph said that during

the meeting, the first official contact between the Afghan and British governments, Mr Zahid sought permission for opening an "agency" in London, viewed as a first step towards establishing an embassy.

"I told them (Afghans) that there were a large number of things to do before there could be any question of recognition," Mr Fatchett was quoted by the newspaper as saying.

Britain, which toes the US line, has so far not recognised the Taliban government, which controls over 90 per cent of the land in the war-torn country.

Israel behind drive against Taliban, Osama

From Special Correspondent

ISLAMABAD - The current American and British campaign against Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden and Taliban has been masterminded by Israel, reports "The Jerusalem Post," a Jewish English daily.

According to the report, the Israeli intelligence, Mossad monitored a secret meeting in Lebanon's Valley in which representatives from Osama bin Laden, Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas and Armed Islamic Front were present. During the meeting, "The Jerusalem Post," disclosed, the militants discussed plans to attack US and British targets. Most of the targets were selected in the middle East, gulf and in Europe in revenge for the Operation Desert Fox.

The Mossad immediately informed both the CIA and the M-160 Both made contingency plans to hit Osama and his associates. Both the agencies were high profile and could hit their victim at anytime.

Later, London-based Arabic daily "Al-Hayat", said it received a handwritten letter from the Armed Islamic Front warning that it would target the embassies of the United States, Britain, France and five Arab countries including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan and Sultanate of Oman.

Based on the report of the Mossad, the CIA found out also that Osama bin Laden and his associates were also planning to attack US embassies in South East Asia.

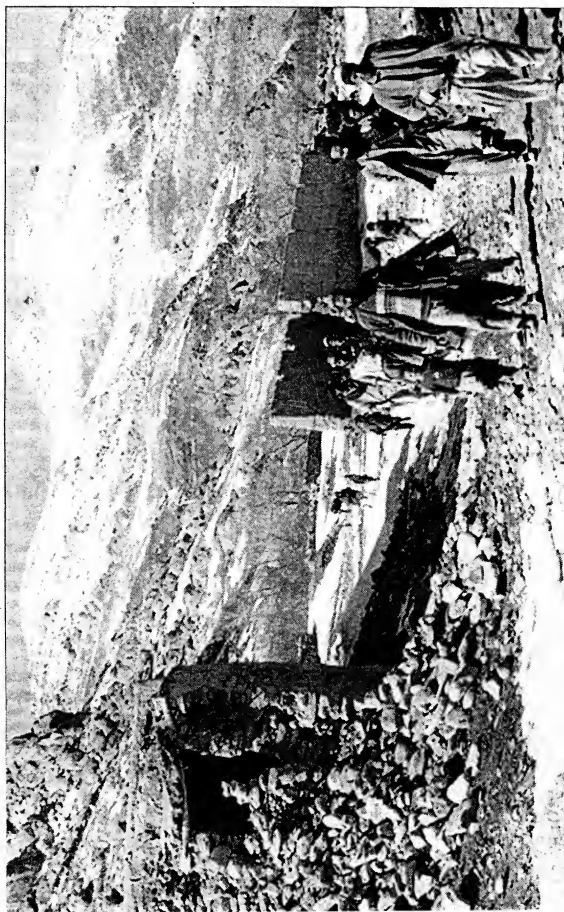
DAWN

11 FEB 1999

A western diplomat who sought anonymity disclosed that the information gathered about the planned attacks were credible and that he believed that there was a link between Osama Taliban and armed groups fighting in Indian occupied Kashmir.

FRONTIER POST

17 FEB 1999



KABUL: Afghan villagers from Ander, 70 km west of Kabul, seek a safer place on Saturday after their village was levelled by an earthquake.—AFP

DAWN

14 FEB 1973

NATION 14 FEB 1993



ANDER: Afghan villagers sift through the rubble here, 70 kilometers west of Kabul, on Saturday. Ander was one of many villages levelled by the earthquake which struck eastern Afghanistan 11 February, killing at least 67 with rescuers fearing rise in toll.—AFP



ANDER: Afghan villagers from Ander, 70km west of Kabul, seek a safer place after their village was levelled by an earthquake which struck eastern Afghanistan two days ago.—AFP

NATION 15 FEB 1993

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

16 FEB 1999



Galina Mitrofanieva, right, holds a portrait of her son Alexey who was killed in Afghanistan, during the ceremony Monday for the 10th anniversary of the withdrawal of Soviet troops. The ceremony was held in St Petersburg for the Soviet troops who died during the war in Afghanistan.—AP photo



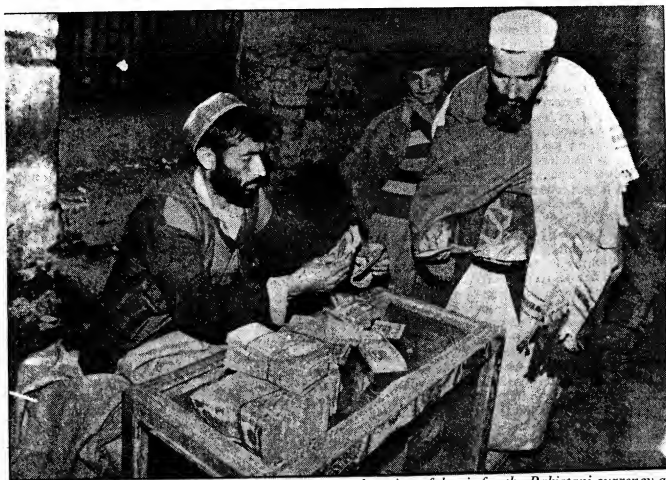
Afghan musicians perform in Peshawar Wednesday as Taliban have banned music, video and audio tapes after their takeover in Afghanistan.—AP photo

THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL

16 FEB 1999



A big heroin laboratory destroyed by the Taliban in the Tangi area in Achin district of Nangarhar province. The factory was reportedly owned by a Pakistani national.—Staff photo by Tariq Aziz



PESHAWAR: An Afghan money-changer is busy exchanging afghanis for the Pakistani currency at the Pak-Afghan border town of Torkham. The Afghan currency was at 877 to a rupee here on the kerb market on Wednesday.—F.P. photo by SAJJAD KHIYAL



The Taliban troops during their anti-narcotics drive in the Nangarhar province.—Staff photo by Tariq Aziz

NATION

22 FEB 1999

notebooks claim that he paid \$500 in order to secure a private jail cell and to ensure that his equipment wasn't stolen. He also wrote a letter asking for help from a doctor at the local hospital, but it was never sent. He was not beaten during his interrogation, nor was he humiliated. Without laying a hand on him, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (I.S.I.) managed to put the fear of God in him.

"You're in a gray, dingy room with a bare lightbulb," says Mark Stucke, who has also been interrogated by the I.S.I. "No toilets, no nothing. . . . They would have been accusing him very directly and simply. Five or six guys just pushing him up against a wall, telling him he's lying, shining lights in his eyes, keeping him awake. They would have said, 'You're a journalist. You're working for the Americans. If we catch you lying, we're going to get you.' He would have walked out, but he would have been worried that, one way or another, they would prove he was under contract with an American network. And then what happens? He's invisible to the world, and they could come get him anytime they want. They are a law unto themselves."

On August 7—the day of the embassy bombings—police at the Karachi airport had grabbed a man named Mohammed Saddiq Odeh, who was suspected of being a bin Laden operative. Pakistan police claimed he confessed to involvement in the bombings, although Odeh later said the confession had been coerced. One can only imagine, then, what the I.S.I. must have thought when they grabbed Carlos—dressed as an Afghan and carrying a satellite phone—also trying to get across the border. And then they would have opened his passport and seen that he'd left Nairobi just two days before the bombing. They would have thought he was either a bin Laden agent or an American spy. Far from allaying their suspicions, his CBS credentials would have been exactly the kind of cover they would assume an American spy would use. Carlos was suddenly in the kind of trouble that even embassies and heads of state can't get you out of. He was in the kind of trouble that can get you tortured or dumped in a culvert, dead.

Neither happened. The I.S.I. must have decided that Carlos was telling the truth. Or perhaps it decided that it could pick him up anytime and simply wanted to see his next move. The following morning, August 26, Carlos was released from jail and driven by intelligence agents back to Bannu. They put him on a bus, and he arrived in Peshawar late that afternoon. He didn't even walk around the corner and say hello to Yusufzai. He just went back to Green's Hotel.

Around 9:30 that night he called Fazai-pour and told her what had happened. "Did they treat you badly?" she asked. "No," he replied.

"Don't lie—did they beat you up?"

Carlos insisted they hadn't, but he was frightened. Fazai-pour offered to meet him in Islamabad the next day, but he said he'd be out of Pakistan in 48 hours. They hung up, and Carlos called the CBS office in New York and left a message for Leslie Cockburn. She called him as soon as she got in, at one A.M. Pakistan time, but he didn't answer, even though he was almost certainly in the room. She tried again at seven A.M. and woke him up. He said to call back in half an hour, but when she did, he had already left. A little later that morning an Englishwoman named Sue Roaf was driving down the Grand Trunk Road when she saw Carlos get into a rickshaw in front of the Pearl Continental. "There was a cocky air about him," she says. "He looked like he was being clever."

It's likely that Carlos had gone to the hotel to find Peter Jouvenal, who had just arrived in town. Jouvenal wasn't there, because he was visiting Yusufzai, whose office was the next place Carlos thought to look. Both men say that Carlos was in very high spirits when he walked in the door. He told them that an Urdu newspaper had reported that he was a spy, which seemed to amuse him greatly. He chatted for a while and then trotted out of the office, though not before making plans to meet Jouvenal for dinner. The staff at Green's Hotel report that he came back briefly around noon and asked an employee named Shuja Uddin to translate the Urdu newspaper article for him. Then he left again and didn't come back until four or five, going straight to his room. Soon after that CBS started calling from New York and Fazai-pour started calling from London. He never picked up the phone.

For the next two hours both his satellite phone and his room phone rang intermittently, without answer. Finally, around 9:30 P.M., Shuja Uddin and the general manager, Arif Chaudhry, went upstairs and knocked on Carlos's door. There was no response, so they stuck a master key in the doorknob and entered. Carlos was shirtless, slumped over on the side of his bed. His right arm hung down to the floor. He didn't respond when they said his name.

The doctor who was summoned to the hotel by Police Chief Saad estimated that Carlos had died three or four hours earlier—soon after he had returned to his room. The body was transferred to the Khyber Medical College that night, and an autopsy was performed at eight A.M. by a top forensic specialist, Dr. Inayat-

FEB 1999

Dispatches



"My first impression of Carlos was that he was mad," says Tannaz Fazaipour, a wealthy Iranian émigré who had planned to marry Mavroleon.



CASUALTIES OF WAR

From top: Mavroleon being released in Mongolia in 1993; Mavroleon (second from right) with a group of mujahideen that includes "Zabot the Dervish" (second from left); a legendary commander who was later decapitated by a Russian tank shell, 1987, with a ritual beheading ceremony, January 11, April 1994.

ur-Rahman Khalil. Blood taken from the left side of the heart showed high concentrations of diacetylmorphine—heroin—as did tissue taken from a minute injection site on his left arm. The syringe that was found under the bed also tested positive for heroin. Carlos's scalp and skull were intact, and the neck was untouched. In other words, there were no signs of a struggle.

While the autopsy was performed, Malik Saad conducted a much more thorough search of Carlos's room. Peter Jouvenal was summoned to the scene, and when he walked into the hotel lobby, three I.S.I. agents immediately started questioning him about whether Carlos was a Muslim. Jouvenal said that he thought Carlos was, and the three agents accompanied him into the room to meet with Saad. With Jouvenal watching, one of them lifted the television and found three packets of white powder, one of them already opened. The packets, as it turned out, contained crude opium powder, brown heroin, and an antihistamine tranquilizer. The heroin was 60 percent pure and of a type easily bought at a taxi stand around the corner from Green's. It would have cost about a dollar.

The questions that would torment certain members of the Mavroleon family were whether the drugs could have been planted in the room, and whether Carlos could have been forced or manipulated into injecting himself. It's not an unreasonable idea. It was an unstable time in Peshawar, and anyone who wanted the death to look self-inflicted would have turned to Carlos's heroin problem. Still, it would have been hard to pull off. Several men would have had to enter Carlos's room undetected, enjoin him to smoke heroin with them, and then inject him against his will. They also would have

had to remain sober enough to make their escape past the hotel guards and the reception desk.

And, moreover, why would they? It's inconceivable that during the two or three

hours Carlos spent in Miram Shah he managed to find out something that wasn't already generally known. (Several days later, in fact, Rahimullah Yusufzai drove into the camps, shot footage of the destruction, and sold it to the BBC and ABC.) The only footage that Carlos might have filmed was that of wounded Afghans inside the Miram Shah hospital, but, if anything, that was great anti-American propaganda.

And even if Pakistan intelligence had had reason to kill him, it would never have done it with such subtlety. This was a time, after all, when two Westerners were gunned down in Kabul in broad daylight. Carlos would have suffered the same fate. It would have been much easier for the I.S.I. to have dumped him in a ravine where there were plenty of terrorists around to blame the murder on. In all likelihood: Carlos returned to the hotel room buoyed by the novelty of being in Peshawar, but still disappointed. Had things gone well, this trip could have turned his whole life around; it would have given his business a tremendous boost and instilled in him exactly the kind of confidence he needed.

He would have smoked a little bit and then—perhaps unsatisfied with the low-quality heroin—dissolved a little in alcohol or hot tap water. Syringes are a standard part of any Third World travel kit, so he would have got one out of his bag and filled it with the dissolved heroin. Carlos was a fit, sinewy man, and he would not have needed a tourniquet to find a vein; he would have just laid his left arm out and slid the needle in. Then he would have sat on the edge of his bed, looking out the window at the dusty rooftops of Peshawar and waiting for the heroin to take effect.

The effect would have been massive. He had been relatively clean lately, so his heroin tolerance would have been very low. Within minutes his respiratory system would have started to slow down, and less and less oxygen would have been getting into his lungs. The cigarette in his mouth would have cut down on his air supply still further. Carlos may have registered the fact that he was suffocating, but it would not have bothered him. One of the reasons heroin is so blissful is that it suppresses the reticular-activating system, which governs our state of alertness, as well as our response to pain. Carlos would have started to shiver with cold, his breathing would have gotten shallower, and he would have started to suffocate. He would have known something was wrong, but he wouldn't have been able to do anything about it. And it wouldn't have mattered much to him anyway. It would all be happening at some wonderful, numb distance. His death would have struck him as the least interesting thing in the world. □

Explaining the Taliban's phenomenal rise

Gen (R) K M Arif

The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-97 by Kamal Matinuddin (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp288, price Rs450)

The British rulers in India learnt the hard way that Afghanistan was not an easy meat to digest at will. The erstwhile Soviet Union refused to benefit from the British stumble into the Afghan Wars and paid a heavy price for its misadventure in 1979. The historians will debate if the Afghan jihad launched by the fiercely independent and intensely proud Afghans against the occupation of their country by the Soviet military forces, expedited the implosion of this superpower with its vast arsenal of nuclear and conventional hardware in place and unused. Never before in the history of warfare a military pigmy had mauled a combat giant so comprehensively as the sharpshooters of Afghanistan did to the warlords of the Soviet Union.

That the jihad succeeded despite differences within the Afghan Mujahideen groups baffled many academics, military analysts and political thinkers. This depicted the unique complexion of the tribal society in Afghanistan with its multiple power centres, each possessive of its authority, while having a workable modus vivendi with the national power centre in Kabul. With the Soviet military forced to quit Afghanistan, the different factions of Mujahideen turned their guns inwards and an intense civil war ensued among the war-hardened allies now turned adversaries. Despite the departure of the aggressors, peace remained elusive, in-fighting continued and Afghanistan was devastated. This

harakiri lured some thinkers to rush to the conclusion that Afghanistan was a failed state.

To the surprise of foreign experts, a phoenix emerged in 1994 out of the ashes of the semi-burnt and half-destroyed country. Initially, the Taliban were not taken seriously either by the warring factions in Afghanistan or by the foreign area specialists. Working on the maxim 'nothing succeeds like success' the Taliban soon made their military clout felt by achieving a series of operational successes in relatively quick time. They went on to establish their writ in 27 out of 32 provinces in the country, including the capital city, Kabul. This motley group of barely-literate, half-trained and fiercely devoted ultra-rightist elements sent shivers of awe down the spines of some countries and those of hatred in others. The Western countries perceived that an Islamic Afghanistan with an extremist government posed a danger to the western civilisation and culture. Besides, the Western economic interests in the fuel-rich countries in the Central Asian Republics and the Gulf were perceived to face dangers.

Kamal Matinuddin's book "The Taliban Phenomenon" (Afghanistan 1994-1997) covers this subject comprehensively and objectively. It painstakingly traces the origin of the rise of the Taliban movement, eminently presents the achievements and pitfalls of this development, and looks into the foreseeable future candidly and objectively. The book spread over eleven chapters has a brief foreword by former Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yaqub Khan. Written in a lucid and readable style the author has expertly analysed the ethnic divide in Afghanistan and the role it plays in its contemporary developments. His crys-

tal gazing of the Taliban phenomenon into the future is frank, objective and unbiased.

It is a timely publication that helps in removing many cobwebs, misperceptions and half-truths and peeps into the future in a fair and realistic manner. It fills in a void and provides a synthesised narrative to the readers to enrich their souls with the events, developments and personalities involved in the ongoing struggle for power played on the political chessboard in Afghanistan.

The data, culled out from the published material—mostly reports of journalists and academics—has been expertly pieced together into a coherent narrative. Herein lies the strength and the weakness of the book.

Strength, because it is a welcome addition to a hazy subject on which not much research work has so far appeared in print at the professional and at academic levels. Most of the work on the subject has so far been done by Western scholars who usually give a slanted view of any radical Islamic state. The myth of the clash of civilisations clouds their thinking. Afghanistan's strategic proximity to two oil-rich regions — the Gulf and the Central Asia — makes it important to the West whose economic stakes are high for the western powers. The book attempted by an oriental author, therefore, presents another point of view.

The weakness lies in the reality that religious extremism brings back to the Western countries bitter memories of the Christian crusaders. Regrettably, Pakistan's own journalists, relying heavily on the western sources of information, tend to place style over substance in a manner that it becomes difficult to separate fiction from facts. The truth is swept under the carpet and it may remain unexposed till the official records, in Pakistan and abroad, are made pub-

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Addicted to Danger

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